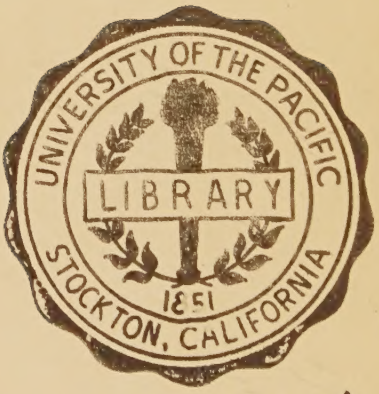

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THREE PLAYS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE HARP-WEAVER AND OTHER POEMS

RENASCENCE AND OTHER POEMS

A FEW FIGS FROM THISTLES

SECOND APRIL

ARIA DA CAPO

TWO SLATTERNS AND A KING

THE LAMP AND THE BELL

THREE PLAYS

BY

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMXXVI

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FIRST EDITION

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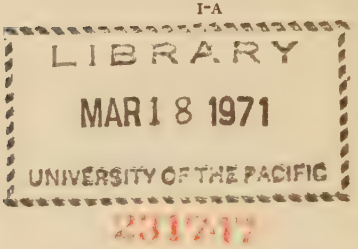

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CONTENTS

TWO SLATTERNS AND A KING 3
A Moral Interlude

ARIA DA CAPO 17
A Play in One Act

THE LAMP AND THE BELL 47
A Drama in Five Acts

TWO SLATTERNS AND A KING

A Moral Interlude

PERSONS

THE KING
CHANCE the VICE
TIDY the false SLATTERN
SLUT the true SLATTERN

The *PROLOGUE* and
EPILOGUE are spoken
by CHANCE

Two Slatterns and a King

PROLOGUE

I AM that cunning infidel
By men called CHANCE,—*you know me well.*
It is through me you met your wives;
Through me your harvest blights or thrives;
And one and all, through me, to-day
Hither you came to see the play,
Which if your favor still you lend,
As now, so on until the end,
You shall be taught what way a King
Though a sublime and awful thing
And even wise, may come to be
A laughing-stock,—and all through me! [*Exit.*

Enter KING.

King. I am the King of all this land:
I hold a scepter in my hand;
Upon my head I wear a crown;
Everybody stands when I sit down. [*Sits.*

Chance. [*Appearing to audience; he is invisible throughout the play to the other players in it.*]
Excepting me,—please bear in mind
I sit whenever I feel inclined. [*Sits.*
King. Although my lands are wide and long,
My walls right thick, my armies strong,
I am not wholly satisfied.
Chance. That is because you have no bride.
King. Who speaks?—Come forth and, if you dare,
Say once again what causes my care!
Why I am discontent with life!
Chance. It is because you have no wife.
King. A woman in my royal house!
A woman! A wife! A bride! A spouse!
Bold stranger, that is not the cure,
For a woman I could never endure!
Chance. Per-Chance to-morrow you will find
You have altered your imperial mind.
[*Exeunt* KING *and* CHANCE *severally.*]

Enter TIDY.

Tidy. I am Tidy, I have been
All my life both neat and clean.

From my outside to my in
Clean am I unto my skin.
Every day into a bucket
My hands I dip, my head I duck it;
And if the water plenty be
I sometimes wet some more of me.
This is my kitchen, where you will find
All things pleasant and to your mind;
Against the wall in orderly pairs—
One, two,—one, two,—observe my chairs.
In the middle of the room my table stands:
I would not move it for many lands.
My basins and bowls are all in their places;
The bottoms of my pots are as clean as your faces.
My kettle boils so cheerily,
It is like a friendly voice to me;
About my work I merrily sing,
And I brush my hearth with a white duck's wing.
Oh, full is every cupboard, sharp is every knife!—
My bright, sunny kitchen is the pride of my life!

[*Exit* TIDY.]

Enter SLUT.

Slut. I am Slut; I am a slattern,
You must not take me for your pattern.

I spend my days in slovenly ease;
I sleep when I like and I wake when I please.
My manners, they are indolent;
In clutter and filth I am quite content.
This is my kitchen, where I stir up my messes,
And wear out my old shoes and soiled silk dresses.
My table sags beneath the weight
Of stale food and unwashed plate;
The cat has tipped the pitcher o'er,—
The greasy cream drips onto the floor;
Under the table is a broken cup—
I am too tired to pick it up.

[*Exit* SLUT.]

Enter KING.

King. Now I will no longer tarry
For I think that I will marry.
Now the one thing in my life
Is to marry me a wife.
But I will not be content
With a wench that's indolent,
Or take a slattern for a spouse,—
I will go from house to house,
Unheralded—that there may be
No cleaning up because of me—

And that maid whose kitchen's neatest
Will I have to be my sweetest.

[*Exit* KING.]

CHANCE *appears.*

Chance. That I am absent do not fear
For that you have not seen me here,
For know, I oft invisibly
Do move among the things you see;
And to confuse and thwart the King
Through Slut and Tidy, is a thing
Dear to my nature,—wherefore heed,
And you shall see a show indeed!

[*Exit* CHANCE.]

Enter TIDY *in great disorder.*

Tidy. Oh, dear, oh, dear, what shall I do?
Oh, such a plight I never knew!
Though I arose as is my way
An hour before the break of day,
Here it is noon, and nothing done;
The milk has soured in the sun,
And the sweet, pretty duck I broiled
A neighbor's dog has dragged and spoiled;
I beat him with my hands and wept!

Straight through the window then he leapt,
And through the window after him,
With scratchèd face and bruisèd limb,
And on through mire and brier and bog
Hours and hours I chased that dog,
Stumbling, uttering awful cries—
While into my kitchen swarmed the flies!
I came back at half-past ten!
Oh, what a sight did greet me then!
My fair white sheets I'd hung so fine
Down in the black muck under the line!
And out of the oven from cakes 'n' pies 'n'
Beautiful tarts the thick smoke risin'!
I knelt down my tarts to remove,
And my quince jelly that stood on the stove
Up did boil, and, as you see,
Boiled itself all over me!—
All over the floor, all over the room,—
Whereat I ran to fetch the broom—
The broom! The broom—instead of the mop!
To fetch a broom to wipe up slop!
And with its handle smashed the clock's face,
Getting glass all over the place,
And knocked the dishes off the shelf,
And fell to my knees and cut myself,

And wept and cried and when I would rise
Could not see for the tears in my eyes;
So tripped on a chair and, to save a fall,
Caught at the table, then flat did sprawl,
Dragging the table down with me,
And everything on it, as well you may see!
I cannot live in such a state!
But where to begin is past my pate!

Enter KING.

King. I am the King of all these lands:
Down upon your knees and hands.
Wishing to marry me, I have said
That the tidiest maiden I would wed
In all my realm, wherefore I go
From kitchen to kitchen, that I may know
And judge for myself what maid is worth
To sit by my side in feasting and in mirth.
Untidy Spill-time, it is easy to see
That my fair bride you never will be.

Tidy. Oh, great King, hear me when I say
This has been a most unusual day!
It is by chance alone you see
In such a state my kitchen and me!
I can set us both to rights in a minute!

King. In vain! I have set a trap and caught you in it!
Vain, wench, your lies and your pretense!
I see what I see and I hie me hence!
[*Exit* KING. *Exit* TIDY, *weeping.*]

Enter SLUT.

Slut. Lest you know me not in this disguise
I tell you I am Slut, and I tell you no lies.
My face and my hands are clean and neat;
Fresh is my frock, trim are my feet.
But I assure you you are not wrong
To think that so tidy I shall not be for long.
And if the story you wish from me,
I will tell you how this came to be:
Dull was the day and tedious my book;
I saw no pleasure wherever I might look;
I had done everything that I knew how to do,
And I could think of nothing new.
But at last I thought of one
Thing that I had never done.
And I said, "I will take a broom,
And I will sweep this room!
I will wash this floor!"
I had never washed it before—
"All things in order will I arrange,

Although I hate order, for it will be a change."
So here I am, as you can see—
I and my kitchen as clean as can be.
But in a room as clean as this
My bones ache and I find no bliss.
So watch, and soon it will appear
Much less orderly and drear.

Enter KING.

King. Down upon your knees and hands!
I am the King of all these lands.
Wishing to marry me, I have said
That the tidiest maiden I would wed
In all my realms, wherefore I go
From kitchen to kitchen that I may know—
Yet stay! This kitchen is so tidy,
I think that you must be my bridey!
As far and wide as I have been
So neat a kitchen I have not seen;
Wherefore I say you are my wife,
For the remainder of your life.

Slut [*Aside.*] To point him out his error at first I intended,
But least said is soonest mended.

[*Exit* KING *with* SLUT.]

Enter TIDY.

Tidy. Now once again with me
All is as it is wont to be.
Now once again you see me stand
The tidiest lady in the land.
If the King should see me now
He would tell a different tale, I trow.

Enter KING.

King. Oh, lovely lady, who are you,
That I am talking to?
Tidy. She am I whom you did scorn
This very day at morn.
King. It may not be as you have said,
For you would I gladly wed!
Tidy. I thank you for the favor, but
They tell me you have married Slut!
King. Oh, cock's bones! And strike me dead!
Is it a Slut that I have wed?

Enter SLUT *dressed as at first.*

Slut. So here you dally whilst I sit at home!
Never any more abroad shall you roam,
But sit at home with me for the rest of your life,
For I am your lawful wedded wife!

King. Oh, woe is me, what a life will be mine!
Slut. It is too late now to repine:
Home with me you come for the rest of your life,
For Slut is your lawful wedded wife!
[*Exit* SLUT *with* KING.]

Tidy. A slattern is a fearful sight,—ah, me!
What pleasure it gives so tidy to be!
[*Exit* TIDY.]

EPILOGUE

Now that the play is at an end,
By Chance *you* have enjoyed it, friend;
By Chance to *you* his sweet was gall;
By Chance *you* slumbered through it all.
Howe'er it be, it was by Chance
The King was led so merry a dance,
By Chance that Tidy met disgrace,
By Chance alone Slut washed her face;
From morn to eve the whole day long
It was by Chance that things went wrong.
Wherefore, good friends, t' escape derision,
Be not o'er hasty in your decision,
For he who heedeth not this rule
By Chance He Will be Called a Fool!

ARIA DA CAPO

A Play
in One Act

PERSONS

Pierrot

Columbine

Cothurnus, Masque of Tragedy

Thyrsis, Corydon } Shepherds

ARIA DA CAPO

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

SCENE

A Stage

THE curtain rises on a stage set for a Harlequinade, a merry black and white interior. Directly behind the footlights, and running parallel with them, is a long table, covered with a gay black and white cloth, on which is spread a banquet. At the opposite ends of this table, seated on delicate thin-legged chairs with high backs, are PIERROT *and* COLUMBINE, *dressed according to tradition, excepting that* PIERROT *is in lilac, and* COLUMBINE *in pink. They are dining.*

Columbine. Pierrot, a macaroon! I cannot *live*
without a macaroon!

Pierrot. My only love,
You are *so* intense! . . . Is it Tuesday, Columbine?—
I'll kiss you if it's Tuesday.

Columbine. It is Wednesday,

If you must know. . . . Is this my artichoke,
Or yours?

Pierrot. Ah, Columbine,—as if it mattered!
Wednesday. . . . Will it be Tuesday, then, to-morrow,
By any chance?

Columbine. To-morrow will be—Pierrot,
That isn't funny!

Pierrot. I thought it rather nice.
Well, let us drink some wine and lose our heads
And love each other.

Columbine. Pierrot, don't you love
Me now?

Pierrot. La, what a woman!—how should I know?
Pour me some wine: I'll tell you presently.

Columbine. Pierrot, do you know, I think you drink too much.

Pierrot. Yes, I dare say I do. . . . Or else too little.
It's hard to tell. You see, I am always wanting
A little more than what I have,—or else
A little less. There's something wrong. My dear,
How many fingers have you?

Columbine. La, indeed,

How should I know?—It always takes me one hand
To count the other with. It's too confusing.
Why?

Pierrot. Why?—I am a student, Columbine;
And search into all matters.

Columbine. La, indeed?—
Count them yourself, then!

Pierrot. No. Or, rather, *nay.*
'Tis of no consequence. . . . I am become
A painter, suddenly,—and you impress me—
Ah, yes!—six orange bull's-eyes, four green pinwheels,
And one magenta jelly-roll,—the title
As follows: *Woman Taking in Cheese from Fire-Escape.*

Columbine. Well, I like that! So that is all I've meant
To you!

Pierrot. Hush! All at once I am become
A pianist. I will image you in sound. . . .
On a new scale. . . . Without tonality. . . .
Vivace senza tempo senza tutto. . . .
Title: *Uptown Express at Six o'Clock.*
Pour me a drink.

Columbine. Pierrot, you work too hard.

You need a rest. Come on out into the garden,
And sing me something sad.
Pierrot. Don't stand so near me!
I am become a socialist. I love
Humanity; but I hate people. Columbine,
Put on your mittens, child; your hands are cold.
Columbine. My hands are *not* cold!
Pierrot. Oh, I am sure they are.
And you must have a shawl to wrap about you,
And sit by the fire.
Columbine. Why, I'll do no such thing!
I'm hot as a spoon in a teacup!
Pierrot. Columbine,
I'm a philanthropist. I know I am,
Because I feel so restless. Do not scream,
Or it will be the worse for you!
Columbine. Pierrot,
My vinaigrette! I cannot *live* without
My vinaigrette!
Pierrot. My only love, you are
So fundamental! . . . How would you like to be
An actress, Columbine?—I am become
Your manager.
Columbine. Why, Pierrot, *I* can't act.

Pierrot. Can't act! Can't act! La, listen to the woman!
What's that to do with the price of furs?—You're blonde,
Are you not?—you have no education, have you?—
Can't act! You underrate yourself, my dear!
Columbine. Yes, I suppose I do.
Pierrot. As for the rest,
I'll teach you how to cry, and how to die,
And other little tricks; and the house will love you.
You'll be a star by five o'clock . . . that is,
If you will let me pay for your apartment.
Columbine. *Let* you?—well, that's a good one!
Ha! Ha! Ha!
But why?
Pierrot. But why?—well, as to that, my dear,
I cannot say. It's just a matter of form.
Columbine. Pierrot, I'm getting tired of caviar
And peacocks' livers. Isn't there something else
That people eat?—some humble vegetable,
That grows in the ground?
Pierrot. Well, there are mushrooms.
Columbine. Mushrooms!
That's so. I had forgotten . . . mushrooms . . . mushrooms. . . .

I cannot *live* with . . . How do you like this gown?

Pierrot. Not much. I'm tired of gowns that have the waist-line
About the waist, and the hem around the bottom,—
And women with their breasts in front of them!—
Zut and ehè! Where does one go from here!

Columbine. Here's a persimmon, love. You always liked them.

Pierrot. I am become a critic; there is nothing
I can enjoy. . . . However, set it aside;
I'll eat it between meals.

Columbine. Pierrot, do you know,
Sometimes I think you're making fun of me.

Pierrot. My love, by yon black moon, you wrong us both.

Columbine. There isn't a sign of a moon, Pierrot.

Pierrot. Of course not.
There never was. "Moon's" just a word to swear by.
"Mutton!"—now *there's* a thing you can lay the hands on,
And set the tooth in! Listen, Columbine:
I always lied about the moon and you.
Food is my only lust.

Columbine. Well, eat it, then,
For Heaven's sake, and stop your silly noise!
I haven't heard the clock tick for an hour.
Pierrot. It's ticking all the same. If you were a fly,
You would be dead by now. And if I were a parrot,
I could be talking for a thousand years!

Enter COTHURNUS.

Pierrot. Hello, what's this, for God's sake?—
What's the matter?
Say, whadda you mean?—get off the stage, my friend,
And pinch yourself,—you're walking in your sleep.
Cothurnus. I never sleep.
Pierrot. Well, anyhow, clear out.
You don't belong on here. Wait for your own scene!
Whadda you think this is,—a dress-rehearsal?
Cothurnus. Sir, I am tired of waiting. I will wait
No longer.
Pierrot. Well, but whadda you going to do?
The scene is set for me!
Cothurnus. True, sir; yet I
Can play the scene.
Pierrot. Your scene is down for later!

Cothurnus. That, too, is true, sir; but I play it now.

Pierrot. Oh, very well!—Anyway, I am tired
Of black and white. At least, I think I am.

[*Exit* COLUMBINE.]

Yes, I am sure I am. I know what I'll do!—
I'll go and strum the moon, that's what I'll do. . . .
Unless, perhaps . . . you never can tell . . . I may be,
You know, tired of the moon. Well, anyway,
I'll go find Columbine. . . . And when I find her,
I will address her thus: "*Ehè*, Pierrette!"—
There's something in that.

[*Exit* PIERROT.]

Cothurnus. You, Thyrsis! Corydon!
Where are you?

Thyrsis. [*Off stage.*] Sir, we are in our dressing-room!

Cothurnus. Come out and do the scene.

Corydon. [*Off stage.*] You are mocking us!—
The scene is down for later.

Cothurnus. That is true;
But we will play it now. I am the scene.

[*Seats himself on high place in back of stage.*

Enter CORYDON *and* THYRSIS.

Corydon. Sir, we are counting on this little hour.
We said, "Here is an hour,—in which to think
A mighty thought, and sing a trifling song,
And look at nothing."—And, behold! the hour,
Even as we spoke, was over, and the act begun,
Under our feet!

Thyrsis. Sir, we are not in the fancy
To play the play. We had thought to play it later.

Corydon. Besides, this is the setting for a farce.
Our scene requires a wall; we cannot build
A wall of tissue-paper!

Thyrsis. We cannot act
A tragedy with comic properties!

Cothurnus. Try it and see. I think you'll find you can.
One wall is like another. And regarding
The matter of your insufficient mood,
The important thing is that you speak the lines
And make the gestures. Wherefore I shall remain
Throughout, and hold the prompt-book. Are you ready?

Corydon-Thyrsis. [*Sorrowfully.*] Sir, we are always ready.

Cothurnus. Play the play!

[CORYDON *and* THYRSIS *move the table and chairs to one side out of the way, and seat themselves in a half-reclining position on the floor.*

Thyrsis. How gently in the silence, Corydon,
Our sheep go up the bank. They crop a grass
That's yellow where the sun is out, and black
Where the clouds drag their shadows. Have you noticed
How steadily, yet with what a slanting eye
They graze?

Corydon. As if they thought of other things.
What say you, Thyrsis, do they only question
Where next to pull?—Or do their far minds draw them
Thus vaguely north of west and south of east?

Thyrsis. One cannot say. . . . The black lamb wears its burdocks
As if they were a garland,—have you noticed?
Purple and white—and drinks the bitten grass
As if it were a wine.

Corydon. I've noticed that.
What say you, Thyrsis, shall we make a song
About a lamb that thought himself a shepherd?

Thyrsis. Why, yes!—that is why,—no. (I have forgotten my line.)

Cothurnus. [*Prompting.*] "I know a game worth two of that!"

Thyrsis. Oh, yes. . . . I know a game worth two of that!

Let's gather rocks, and build a wall between us;
And say that over there belongs to me,
And over here to you!

Corydon. Why,—very well.

And say you may not come upon my side
Unless I say you may!

Thyrsis. Nor you on mine!

And if you should, 'twould be the worse for you!

[*They weave a wall of colored crêpe paper ribbons from the center front to the center back of the stage, fastening the ends to* COLUMBINE'S *chair in front and to* PIERROT'S *chair in the back.*

Corydon. Now there's a wall a man may see across,
But not attempt to scale.

Thyrsis. An excellent wall.

Corydon. Come, let us separate, and sit alone
A little while, and lay a plot whereby

We may outdo each other. [*They seat themselves on opposite sides of the wall.*

Pierrot. [*Off stage.*] *Ehè*, Pierrette!

Columbine. [*Off stage.*] My name is Columbine! Leave me alone!

Thyrsis. [*Coming up to the wall.*] Corydon, after all, and in spite of the fact
I started it myself, I do not like this
So very much. What is the sense of saying
I do not want you on my side the wall?
It is a silly game. I'd much prefer
Making the little song you spoke of making,
About the lamb, you know, that thought himself
A shepherd!—what do you say?

[*Pause.*]

Corydon. [*At wall.*] I have forgotten the line.

Cothurnus. [*Prompting.*] "How do I know this isn't a trick—"

Corydon. Oh, yes. . . . How do I know this isn't a trick
To get upon my land?

Thyrsis. Oh, Corydon,
You *know* it's not a trick. I do not like
The game, that's all. Come over here, or let me

Come over there.

Corydon. It is a clever trick
To get upon my land. [*Seats himself as before.*

Thyrsis. Oh, very well! [*Seats himself as before. To himself.*] I think I never knew a sillier game.

Corydon. [*Coming to wall.*] Oh, Thyrsis, just a minute!—all the water
Is on your side the wall, and the sheep are thirsty. I hadn't thought of that.

Thyrsis. Oh, hadn't you?

Corydon. Why, what do you mean?

Thyrsis. What do I mean?—I mean
That I can play a game as well as you can.
And if the pool is on my side, it's on
My side, that's all.

Corydon. You mean you'd let the sheep
Go thirsty?

Thyrsis. Well, they're not my sheep. My sheep
Have water enough.

Corydon. Your sheep! You are mad, to call them
Yours—mine—they are all one flock! Thyrsis, you can't mean
To keep the water from them, just because
They happened to be grazing over here
Instead of over there, when we set the wall up?

Thyrsis. Oh, can't I?—wait and see!—and if you try
To lead them over here, you'll wish you hadn't!
Corydon. I wonder how it happens all the water
Is on your side. . . . I'll say you had an eye out
For lots of little things, my innocent friend,
When I said, "Let us make a song," and you said,
"I know a game worth two of that!"
Columbine. [*Off stage.*] Pierrot,
D'you know, I think you must be getting old,
Or fat, or something,—stupid, anyway!—
Can't you put on some other kind of collar?
Thyrsis. You know as well as I do, Corydon,
I never thought anything of the kind.
Don't you?
Corydon. I *do* not.
Thyrsis. Don't you?
Corydon. Oh, I suppose so.
Thyrsis, let's drop this,—what do you say?—it's only
A game, you know . . . we seem to be forgetting
It's only a game . . . a pretty serious game
It's getting to be, when one of us is willing
To let the sheep go thirsty for the sake of it.
Thyrsis. I know it, Corydon.

[*They reach out their arms to each other across the wall.*

Cothurnus. [*Prompting.*] "But how do I know—"

Thyrsis. Oh, yes. . . . But how do I know this isn't a trick
To water your sheep, and get the laugh on me?

Corydon. You can't know, that's the difficult thing about it,
Of course,—you can't be sure. You have to take
My word for it. And I know just how you feel.
But one of us has to take a risk, or else,
Why, don't you see?—the game goes on forever! . . .
It's terrible, when you stop to think of it. . . .
Oh, Thyrsis, now for the first time I feel
This wall is actually a wall, a thing
Come up between us, shutting you away
From me. . . . I do not know you any more!

Thyrsis. No, don't say that! Oh, Corydon, I'm willing
To drop it all, if you will! Come on over
And water your sheep! It is an ugly game.
I hated it from the first. . . . How did it start?

Corydon. I do not know . . . I do not know . . . I think
I am afraid of you!—you are a stranger!

I never set eyes on you before! "Come over
And water my sheep," indeed!—They'll be more thirsty
Than they are now before I bring them over
Into your land, and have you mixing them up
With yours, and calling them yours, and trying to keep them!

Enter COLUMBINE.

Columbine. [*To* COTHURNUS.] Glummy, I want my hat.

Thyrsis. Take it, and go.

Columbine. Take it and go, indeed. Is it my hat,
Or isn't it? Is this my scene, or not?
Take it and go! Really, you know, you two
Are awfully funny!

[*Exit* COLUMBINE.]

Thyrsis. Corydon, my friend,
I'm going to leave you now, and whittle me
A pipe, or sing a song, or go to sleep.
When you have come to your senses, let me know.
[*Goes back to where he has been sitting, lies down and sleeps.* CORYDON, *in going back to where he has*

been sitting, stumbles over bowl of colored confetti and colored paper ribbons.

Corydon. Why, what is this?—Red stones—and purple stones—
And stones stuck full of gold!—The ground is full
Of gold and colored stones! . . . I'm glad the wall
Was up before I found them!—Otherwise,
I should have had to share them. As it is,
They all belong to me. . . . Unless— [*He goes to wall and digs up and down the length of it, to see if there are jewels on the other side.*] None here——
None here—none here—They all belong to me! [*Sits.*

Thyrsis. [*Awakening.*] How curious! I thought the little black lamb
Came up and licked my hair; I saw the wool
About its neck as plain as anything!
It must have been a dream. The little black lamb
Is on the other side of the wall, I'm sure. [*Goes to wall and looks over.* CORYDON *is seated on the ground, tossing the confetti up into the air and catching it.* Hello, what's that you've got there, Corydon?

Corydon. Jewels.

Thyrsis. Jewels?—And where did you ever get them?

Corydon. Oh, over here.

Thyrsis. You mean to say you found them,
By digging around in the ground for them?

Corydon. [*Unpleasantly.*] No, Thyrsis,
By digging down for water for my sheep.

Thyrsis. Corydon, come to the wall a minute, will you?
I want to talk to you.

Corydon. I haven't time.
I'm making me a necklace of red stones.

Thyrsis. I'll give you all the water that you want,
For one of those red stones,—if it's a good one.

Corydon. Water?—what for?—what do I want of water?

Thyrsis. Why, for your sheep!

Corydon. My sheep?—I'm not a shepherd!

Thyrsis. Your sheep are dying of thirst.

Corydon. Man, haven't I told you
I can't be bothered with a few untidy
Brown sheep all full of burdocks?—I'm a merchant.
That's what I am!—And if I set my mind to it
I dare say I could be an emperor!
[*To himself.*] Wouldn't I be a fool to spend my time

Watching a flock of sheep go up a hill,
When I have these to play with?—when I have these
To think about?—I can't make up my mind
Whether to buy a city, and have a thousand
Beautiful girls to bathe me, and be happy
Until I die, or build a bridge, and name it
The Bridge of Corydon,—and be remembered
After I'm dead.
Thyrsis. Corydon, come to the wall,
Won't you?—I want to tell you something.
Corydon. Hush!
Be off! Be off! Go finish your nap, I tell you!
Thyrsis. Corydon, listen: if you don't want your sheep,
Give them to me.
Corydon. Be off! Go finish your nap.
A red one—and a blue one—and a red one—
And a purple one—give you my sheep, did you say?—
Come, come! What do you take me for, a fool?
I've a lot of thinking to do,—and while I'm thinking,
The sheep might just as well be over here
As over there. . . . A blue one—and a red one—

Thyrsis. But they will die!
Corydon. And a green one—and a couple
Of white ones, for a change.
Thyrsis. Maybe I have
Some jewels on my side.
Corydon. And another green one—
Maybe, but I don't think so. You see, this rock
Isn't so very wide. It stops before
It gets to the wall. It seems to go quite deep,
However.
Thyrsis. [*With hatred.*] I see.
Columbine. [*Off stage.*] Look, Pierrot, there's the moon.
Pierrot. [*Off stage.*] Nonsense!
Thyrsis. I see.
Columbine. [*Off stage.*] Sing me an old song, Pierrot,—
Something I can remember.
Pierrot. [*Off stage.*] Columbine,
Your mind is made of crumbs,—like an escallop
Of oysters,—first a layer of crumbs, and then
An oystery taste, and then a layer of crumbs.
Thyrsis. [*Searching.*] I find no jewels . . . but I wonder what
The root of this black weed would do to a man

If he should taste it. . . . I have seen a sheep die,
With half the stalk still drooling from its mouth.
'Twould be a speedy remedy, I should think,
For a festered pride and a feverish ambition.
It has a curious root. I think I'll hack it
In little pieces. . . . First I'll get me a drink;
And then I'll hack that root in little pieces
As small as dust, and see what the color is
Inside. [*Goes to bowl on floor.*]
The pool is very clear. I see
A shepherd standing on the brink, with a red cloak
About him, and a black weed in his hand. . . .
'Tis I. [*Kneels and drinks.*]

Corydon. [*Coming to wall.*] Hello, what are you doing, Thyrsis?

Thyrsis. Digging for gold.

Corydon. I'll give you all the gold
You want, if you'll give me a bowl of water.
If you don't want too much, that is to say.

Thyrsis. Ho, so you've changed your mind?—It's different,
Isn't it, when you want a drink yourself?

Corydon. Of course it is.

Thyrsis. Well, let me see . . . a bowl

Of water,—come back in an hour, Corydon.
I'm busy now.
Corydon. Oh, Thyrsis, give me a bowl
Of water!—and I'll fill the bowl with jewels,
And bring it back!
Thyrsis. Be off, I'm busy now.
[*He catches sight of the weed, picks it up and looks at it, unseen by* CORYDON.]
Wait!—Pick me out the finest stones you have . . .
I'll bring you a drink of water presently.
Corydon. [*Goes back and sits down, with the jewels before him.*]
A bowl of jewels is a lot of jewels.
Thyrsis. [*Chopping up the weed.*] I wonder if it has a bitter taste.
Corydon. There's sure to be a stone or two among them
I have grown fond of, pouring them from one hand
Into the other.
Thyrsis. I hope it doesn't taste
Too bitter, just at first.
Corydon. A bowl of jewels
Is far too many jewels to give away
And not get back again.
Thyrsis. I don't believe

He'll notice. He's too thirsty. He'll gulp it down
And never notice.

Corydon. There ought to be some way
To get them back again. . . . I could give him a necklace,
And snatch it back, after I'd drunk the water,
I suppose. . . . Why, as for that, of course a *necklace. . . .*

[*He puts two or three of the colored tapes together and tries their strength by pulling them, after which he puts them around his neck and pulls them, gently, nodding to himself. He gets up and goes to the wall, with the colored tapes in his hands.* THYRSIS *in the meantime has poured the powdered root—black confetti—into the pot which contained the flower and filled it up with wine from the punch-bowl on the floor. He comes to the wall at the same time, holding the bowl of poison.*

Thyrsis. Come, get your bowl of water, Corydon.

Corydon. Ah, very good!—and for such a gift as that
I'll give you more than a bowl of unset stones.
I'll give you three long necklaces, my friend.
Come closer. Here they are. [*Puts the ribbons about* THYRSIS' *neck.*

Thyrsis. [*Putting bowl to* CORYDON'S *mouth.*] I'll hold the bowl
Until you've drunk it all.
Corydon. Then hold it steady.
For every drop you spill I'll have a stone back
Out of this chain.
Thyrsis. I shall not spill a drop.
[CORYDON *drinks, meanwhile beginning to strangle* THYRSIS.
Thyrsis. Don't pull the string so tight.
Corydon. You're spilling the water.
Thyrsis. You've had enough—you've had enough
—stop pulling
The string so tight!
Corydon. Why, that's not tight at all . . .
How's this?
Thyrsis. [*Drops bowl.*] You're strangling me! Oh, Corydon!
It's only a game!—and you are strangling me!
Corydon. It's only a game, is it?—Yet I believe
You've poisoned me in earnest! [*Writhes and pulls the strings tighter, winding them about* THYRSIS' *neck.*
Thyrsis. Corydon! [*Dies.*

Corydon. You've poisoned me in earnest. . . . I
feel so cold. . . .
So cold . . . this is a very silly game. . . .
Why do we play it?—let's not play this game
A minute more . . . let's make a little song
About a lamb. . . . I'm coming over the wall,
No matter what you say,—I want to be near you. . . .
[*Groping his way, with arms wide before him, he strides through the frail papers of the wall without knowing it, and continues seeking for the wall straight across the stage.*]
Where is the wall? [*Gropes his way back, and stands very near* THYRSIS *without seeing him; he speaks slowly.*]
There isn't any wall, I think. [*Takes a step forward, his foot touches* THYRSIS' *body, and he falls down beside him.*]
Thyrsis, where is your cloak?—just give me
A little bit of your cloak! . . .
[*Draws corner of* THYRSIS' *cloak over his shoulders, falls across* THYRSIS' *body, and dies.*
[COTHURNUS *closes the prompt-book with a bang, arises matter-of-factly, comes down stage, and places the table over the two bodies, drawing down the cover so that they are hidden from any actors*

on the stage, but visible to the audience, pushing in their feet and hands with his boot. He then turns his back to the audience, and claps his hands twice.

Cothurnus. Strike the scene!

[*Exit* COTHURNUS.]

Enter PIERROT *and* COLUMBINE.

Pierrot. Don't puff so, Columbine!

Columbine. Lord, what a mess
This set is in! If there's one thing I hate
Above everything else,—even more than getting my feet wet—
It's clutter!—He might at least have left the scene
The way he found it . . . don't you say so, Pierrot?

[*She picks up punch bowl. They arrange chairs as before at ends of table.*

Pierrot. Well, I don't know. I think it rather diverting
The way it is. [*Yawns, picks up confetti bowl.*] Shall we begin?

Columbine. [*Screams.*] My God!
What's that there under the table?

Pierrot. It is the bodies
Of the two shepherds from the other play.

Columbine. [*Slowly.*] How curious to strangle him
like that,
With colored paper ribbons.

Pierrot. Yes, and yet
I dare say he is just as dead. [*Pauses. Calls.*]
Cothurnus!
Come drag these bodies out of here! We can't
Sit down and eat with two dead bodies lying
Under the table! . . . The audience wouldn't stand
for it!

Cothurnus. [*Off stage.*] What makes you think so?—
Pull down the tablecloth
On the other side, and hide them from the house,
And play the farce. The audience will forget.

Pierrot. That's so. Give me a hand there, Columbine.

[PIERROT *and* COLUMBINE *pull down the table cover in such a way that the two bodies are hidden from the house, then merrily set their bowls back on the table, draw up their chairs, and begin the play exactly as before.*

Columbine. Pierrot, a macaroon,—I cannot *live* without a macaroon!

Pierrot. My only love,
You are *so* intense! . . . Is it Tuesday, Columbine?—
I'll kiss you if it's Tuesday. [*Curtains begin to close slowly.*
Columbine. It is Wednesday,
If you must know. . . . Is this my artichoke
Or yours?
Pierrot. Ah, Columbine, as if it mattered!
Wednesday. . . . Will it be Tuesday, then, tomorrow,
By any chance? . . .

[CURTAIN.]

THE LAMP AND THE BELL

THE LAMP AND THE BELL

Written on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Vassar College Alumnæ Association

Dedicated to "1917"

LORENZO, King of Fiori
MARIO, King of Lagoverde
GUIDO, Duke of Versilia, Illegitimate Nephew to Lorenzo
GIOVANNI, LUIGI, ANSELMO, RAFFAELE } Gentlemen at the Court of Lorenzo
FIDELIO, Jester at the Court of Lorenzo
GIUSEPPE, Agent for the Duke's estates
CESCO, HORATIO } Townsmen of Fiori
BEPPO, a little boy, son to Giuliana
RIGO, little boy, son to Leonora
CLERK
MESSENGER
OCTAVIA, Lorenzo's second wife
BEATRICE, "Rose-Red," daughter to Lorenzo by a former marriage
BIANCA, "Snow-White," daughter to Octavia by a former marriage

LAURA
CARLOTTA
FRANCESCA
VIOLA
LILINA
LELA
ARIANNA
CLAUDIA
CLARA
LUCIA
} Ladies at the Court of Lorenzo

GRAZIA, Nurse to Beatrice and Bianca
GIULIETTA, Servant to Bianca
"LITTLE SNOW-WHITE"
"LITTLE ROSE-RED"

LEONORA
GIULIANA
CLARA
GIOVANITTA
ANNA
EUGENIA
} Women of Fiori

ELENORA
LUISA
} Little girls, daughters to Leonora

GILDA, a little girl, sister to Beppo
ADELINA, another little girl

NURSE
PIERROT
HARLEQUIN
PANTALOON
POLICHINEOLL
COLOMBINE
} Strolling players

Courtiers, Ladies-in-Waiting, Soldiers, Pages, Musicians, Townspeople, Children

PROLOGUE

[Anselmo and Luigi]

Anselmo. What think you,—lies there any
truth in the tale
The King will wed again?
Luigi. Why not, Anselmo?
A king is no less lonely than a collier
When his wife dies. And his young daughter there,
For all her being a princess, is no less
A motherless child, and cries herself to sleep
Night after night, as noisily as any,
You may be sure.
Anselmo. A motherless child loves not,
They say, the second mother. Though the King
May find him comfort in another face,—
As it is well he should—the child, I fancy,
Is not so lonely as she is distraught
With grief for the dead Queen, and will not lightly
Be parted from her tears.
Luigi. If tales be true,
The woman hath a daughter, near the age
Of his, will be a playmate for the Princess.

[Curtain.]

ACT I

Scene I

[*A garden of the palace at Fiori; four years later. Discovered seated* LAURA, FRANCESCA *and* FIDELIO, LAURA *embroidering,* FIDELIO *strumming his lute,* FRANCESCA *lost in thought.*]

Laura. You—Fool! If there be two chords to your lute,
Give us the other for a time!

Francesca. And yet, Laura,
I somewhat fancied that soft sound he made.
'Twas all on the same tone,—but 'twas a sweet tone.

Laura. 'Tis like you. As for myself, let music change
From time to time, or have done altogether.
Sing us the song, Fidelio, that you made
Last night,—a song of flowers, and fair skies,
And nightingales, and love.

Fidelio. I know the song.
It is a song of winter.

Laura. How is that?

Fidelio. Because it is a song of summer set
To a sad tune.

Francesca. [*Sadly.*] Ah, well,—so that it be not
A song of autumn, I can bear to hear it.

Laura. In any case, music. I am in a mood for music.
I am in a mood where if something be not done
To startle me, I shall confess my sins.

Enter CARLOTTA.

Carlotta. Ha! I will have that woman yet by the hair!

Laura. What woman, pray, Carlotta?

Carlotta. Ho! What woman?
Who but that scullery-wench, that onion-monger,
That slatternly, pale bakeress, that foul witch,
The coroneted Fish Wife of Fiori,
Her Majesty, the Queen!

Francesca. Hush—hush—Carlotta!
You could be put to death for less than that!

Carlotta. Not I, my duck. When I am put to death
'Twill be for more! Oh, I will have her yet
By the hair! [*For the first time noticing* FIDELIO.]
Fidelio, if you breathe one word
Of this, I will scratch the Princess into ribbons,
Whom you love better than your wit.

Fidelio. I' faith,
I did but hear you say you are a fish wife,
And all the world knows that.

Laura. Fear not, Carlotta,
He is as dumb as a prophet. Every second word
He utters eats the one before it. Speak,
But softly.

Carlotta. Nay, 'tis nothing.—Nay, by my head,
It is a townful! 'Tis the way she has
Of saying "that should be done like this, and this
Like that"! The woman stirs me to that point
I feel like a carrot in a stew,—I boil so
I bump the kettle on all sides!

Laura. My dear,
Were you as plump as I you would not dare
Become so angry. It would make your stays creak.

Carlotta. Well, I am done. Fidelio, play me a dirge
To put me in good spirits. Merry music
Is sure to make me sad. [FIDELIO *plays. Pause.*

Carlotta. 'Tis curious
A woman like her should have a child like that—
So gentle and so pretty-mannered. Faith,—

Fidelio. Hush! Hush! Here come the prettiest
pair of birds
That ever sat together on a bough so close
You could not see the sky between. How now,
Snow-White and Rose-Red! Are you reconciled
One to another?

Enter BEATRICE *and* BIANCA, *with their arms about each other.*

Bianca. Reconciled, Fidelio?
We had not quarreled! [*Laughter from* FIDELIO *and the ladies.*
Beatrice. Do not listen to him,
Bianca, 'tis but the jingling of his bells.
Fidelio, do you make a better jest than that
At once, or have the clappers cut from them.
Fidelio. Alas, alas,—all the good jests are made.
I made them yesterday.
Carlotta. If that be true,
You would best become a wise man for a time,
My friend,—there are plenty of wise words not yet said!
Fidelio. I shall say them all to-morrow.
Laura. If you do,
You will be stoned to death.

Fidelio. Not I. No one
Will hear me.—Well, I am off.—I know an old man
Who does not know the road runs past his house;
And yet his bees make honey.

[*Exit* FIDELIO.]

Carlotta. [*Looking after him.*] 'Tis the one wise fool
We have among us.

Enter GRAZIA.

Grazia. Oh, here you are, my ducklings!
Always together, like a beggar and a flea!
I looked for you at dinner-time; I forget now
What for; but then 'twas a matter of more weight
Than laying siege to a city,—la, how time
Does carry one on! An hour is like an ocean,
The way it separates you from yourself!—
[*To* BIANCA *and* BEATRICE.] What do you find to talk about all day?

Beatrice. We do not talk all day.

Carlotta. Nay, 'tis you, Grazia,
That talk all day.

Beatrice. We ride, and play at tennis.

Bianca. 'Tis you that ride, Beatrice, I but mount

On a heaving hill, and strive my best to stick there.

Grazia. I' faith, I have seen you going forth,—you sidewise
Aslant your pretty palfrey; and Her Highness,
As God, my judge, astride the devil himself.

Beatrice. What, Cupid?—La, he's gentle as a kitten;
Though he's a little young, 'tis true, not settled yet
In his mind.

Laura. As to his mind, 'twere a small matter,
Were he a bit more settled in his legs!

Grazia. What did I come here for?—I must go back
To where I started, and think of it again!

[*Exit* GRAZIA.]

Carlotta. [*Calling after her.*] Are you sure that you remember where you started?
—— The woman hath a head like a sieve.

Laura. And yet,
You may be sure 'tis nothing more than the thimble
Of the matter she's forgotten. I never knew her
Mislay the thread or the needle of a thing.

Bianca. We must study now, Beatrice, we indeed must.
We have not opened a book since yesterday.
Laura. La, as for me, I have not opened a book
Since yesteryear.—I'd liefer open a vein!
Carlotta. Lessons,—troth, I remember well those lessons.
As for what I learned,—troth, that's a different matter.
Francesca. 'Tis curious; the things that one remembers
Are foolish things. One does not know at all
Why one remembers them. There was a blackbird
With a broken foot somebody found and tamed
And named Euripides!—I can see it now.
Carlotta. Some of the silly rhymes we used to write
In the margins of our books, I still remember!
Laura. And eating sweets behind the covers of them!
Francesca. And faces—faces—faces—and a little game
We used to play, all marching in a row
And singing!—I wish I were a child again.
Beatrice. You are not old, Francesca. You are very young.

And very beautiful!

Francesca. I have been beautiful
Too many years to be so very young.

Carlotta. How now, Francesca! Would you have it said
You are enamoured of some beardless youth,
That so you see the wrinkles suddenly?
Have done! Have done!

Bianca. Where shall we study, Bice?

Beatrice. Indoors. I cannot study out of doors.

[*Exeunt* BEATRICE *and* BIANCA.]

Laura. I vow I never knew a pair of lovers
More constant than those two.

Carlotta. A pair of lovers?
Marry, I find your figure lacking force!
Since when were lovers true?

Francesca. Oh, peace, Carlotta!
You bear too sharp a weapon against the world,—
A split tongue full of poison, in a head
That darts at every heel!—I'm going in.

[*Exit* FRANCESCA.]

Laura. You should not say such things when she is with us, Carlotta.

Carlotta. Is the woman in love?
Laura. In love!
She is so far gone she does not know which way
To sail,—all shores are equally out of sight.

[*Exeunt* LAURA *and* CARLOTTA.]

Music off stage. Enter FIDELIO, *singing.*

Fidelio. "What was I doing when the moon stood above?
What did I do? What did I do?
I lied to a lady that had given me her love,—
I swore to be true! I swore to be true!"
[*He picks up from the grass a white scarf which* BEATRICE *was wearing, and which slipped from her shoulders unnoticed as she went out.*]
My mistress!
[*He thrusts the scarf under his cloak and continues his song, just as* GUIDO *enters from another direction.*]
"And what was I doing when the sun stood above?
What did I do? What did I do?—"
Guido. By my sacred word, Fidelio,
I do not like your song.
Fidelio. Faith, and small wonder!—

It is a song that sets the evil eye
To staring in upon itself.
Guido. [*Stopping in his walk.*] What mean you
By that, my throaty friend?
Fidelio. I mean to say
That, taking it all in all and by and large,
You have no ear for music.
Guido. I have no ear
For yours, but it is possible Apollo
Had a better tenor. I never heard him sing.
Fidelio. Nay, and how could you?—He died when you were born!
Guido. He died, that is, in giving birth to me?
Fidelio. Ay, if you like,—you bear as much resemblance
To him as to your mother's husband, surely.
Guido. Take care, Fidelio!
Fidelio. [*Lightly.*] So! Then it angers you
Apollo should be deemed your sire! I told you [*sadly*]
You have no ear for music!
Guido. You are a sly fool,
My merry friend. What hide you under the cloak?

Fidelio. Why, 'tis a little patch of snow the sun
Would lay too hot a hand on.
Guido. By my life,—
And what are you that you can keep the sun
From shining where it will?
Fidelio. Why, by your life,—
And a foul oath it is!—why, by your life,
I am a cloud,—that is an easy riddle.

Scene II

[*A garden with a fountain, at Fiori.* BEATRICE *and* BIANCA *sitting side by side on a low step. Evening.*]

Beatrice. How beautiful it is to sit like this,
Snow-White,—to think of much, and to say little.
Bianca. Ay, it is beautiful. I shall remember
All my life long these evenings that we spent
Sitting just here, thinking together. [*Pause.*] Rose-Red,
It is four years to-day since first we met.
Did you know that?
Beatrice. Nay, is it?
Bianca. Four years to-day.
I liked you from the moment that I saw you,
Beatrice!

Beatrice. I you, Bianca. From the very moment!
I thought you were the prettiest little girl
That I had ever seen.
Bianca. I was afraid
Of you, a little, at first,—you were a Princess,
You see. But you explained that being a Princess
Was much the same as anything else. 'Twas nice,
You said, when people were nice, and when they were not nice
'Twas hateful, just the same as everything else.
And then I saw your dolls, and they had noses
All scratched, and wigs all matted, just like mine,
Which reassured me even more!—I still, though,
Think of you as a Princess; the way you do things
Is much more wonderful than the way I do them!—
The way you speak to the servants, even the way
You pick up something that you drop.
Beatrice. You goose!
'Tis not because I'm a Princess you feel that way—
I've always thought the same thing about you!—
The way you draw your gloves on is to me
More marvelous than the way the sun comes up!
[*They both burst out laughing.*]
Oh, lud,—how droll we are!
Bianca. Oh, I shall die

Of laughing! Think you anyone else, Rose-Red,
Was ever half so silly?

Beatrice. I dare wager
There be a thousand, in this realm alone,
Some even sillier!

Bianca. Here comes Fidelio!

Enter FIDELIO.

Beatrice. Fidelio, sing to us,—there is no nightingale
Abroad to-night, save you. And the night cries
For music!

Bianca. Sing, Fidelio!

Fidelio. I have no thorn
To lean my breast on. I've been happy all day,
And happiness ever made a crow of me.

Beatrice. Sing, none the less,—unless you have a cold,
Which is a singer's only rock of refuge.
You have no cold, or you would not be happy.
So sing.

Fidelio. [*Singing.*] "Oh, little rose-tree, bloom!
Summer is nearly over.
The dahlias bleed and the phlox is seed,
Nothing's left of the clover,

And the path of the poppy no one knows,—
I would blossom if I were a rose!
Summer for all your guile
Will brown in a week to autumn,
And launched leaves throw a shadow below
Over the brook's clear bottom,
And the chariest bud the year can boast
Be brought to bloom by the chastening frost!
Oh, little rose-tree, bloom!"

[*As he finishes the song* FIDELIO *goes out, softly strumming the last chords.* BIANCA *and* BEATRICE *sit quite still for a moment.*

Bianca. Do you know what I am thinking, Bice?

Beatrice. You're wondering where we'll be ten years from now,
Or something of that nature.

Bianca. Ay, I was wondering
Which would be married first, and go away,
And would we still be friends.

Beatrice. Oh, do you doubt it,
Snow-White?

Bianca. Nay, nay,—I doubt it not, my dear,—
But I was wondering. I am suddenly sad,
I know not why. I do not wish to leave you

Ever.

Beatrice. I know. I cannot bear
To think of parting. We have been happy these four years
Together, have we not?

Bianca. Oh, Beatrice! [*She weeps.*

Beatrice. Nay, do not weep!—Come, you must go to bed.
You are tired to-night. We rode too far to-day.
[*She draws* BIANCA'S *head down to her shoulder.*]
Oh, you are tired, tired, you are very tired.
You must be rocked to sleep, and tucked in bed,
And have your eyelids kissed to make you dream
Of fairies! Come, dear, come.

Bianca. Oh, I do love you,
Rose-Red! You are so sweet! Oh, I do love you
So much!—so much! I never loved anyone
The way that I love you! There is nobody
In all the world so wonderful as you!
[*She throws her arms about* BEATRICE *and clings to her.*

Scene III

[*A room in the palace at Fiori.* LORENZO *and* BEATRICE *playing chess. Twilight.*]

Lorenzo. You'll not be able to get out of that,
I think, my girl, with both your castles gone.

Beatrice. Be not so sure!—I have a horse still, father,
And in a strong position: if I move him here,
You lose your bishop; and if you take my bishop,
You lose your queen.

Lorenzo. True, but with my two rooks
Set here, where I can push them back and forth,
My king is safe till worms come in and eat him.

Beatrice. What say you then to this?—Will you take this pawn,
Or will you not?

Lorenzo. [*Studying the board.*] Od's bones!—where did that come from?

Enter OCTAVIA.

Octavia. La, would you lose your eyesight, both of you!—
Fumbling about those chessmen in the dark?
You, Beatrice, at least, should have more wit!

Lorenzo. "At least"—hm!—Did you hear her say, "at least,"
Bice, my daughter?

Beatrice. Ay. But it is true

The twilight comes before one knows it.
Lorenzo. Ay.
'Tis true, but unimportant. Nevertheless,
I am a tractable old fellow.—Look you,
I will but stay to map the lay of the pieces
Upon this bit of letter. 'Tis from a king
Who could not tell the bishop from the board,—
And yet went blind at forty.—A little chess
By twilight, mark you, and all might have been well.

Enter BIANCA.

Bianca. Oh,—I've been looking everywhere for you!
Octavia. [*Drily.*] For me?
Bianca. Nay, mother,—for Beatrice. Bice,
The rose is out at last upon that bush
That never blossomed before,—and it is white
As linen, just as I said 'twould be!
Beatrice. Why, the bud
Was redder than a radish!
Bianca. Ay, I know.
But the blossom's white, pure white. Come out and see!
[*Politely.*] Would you like to see it, mother?

Octavia. Nay, not now, child.
Some other time.

Beatrice. Father, we'll end the game
To-morrow; and do you not be scheming at it
All night!

Lorenzo. Nay, I will not unfold the chart.

Beatrice. But you remember well enough without;
Promise me not to think of it.

Lorenzo. I' faith,
You are a desperate woman. Ay, I promise.

[*Exeunt* BIANCA *and* BEATRICE. OCTAVIA *seats herself. Pause.*]

Octavia. I tell you, as I've told you often before,
Lorenzo, 'tis not good for two young girls
To be so much together!

Lorenzo. As you say,
Octavia. For myself, I must confess
It seems a natural thing enough, that youth
Should seek out youth. And if they are better pleased
Talking together than listening to us,
I find it not unnatural. What have we
To say to children?—They are as different

From older folk as fairies are from them.

Octavia. "Talking together," Lorenzo! What have they
To talk about, save things they might much better
Leave undiscussed?—you know what I mean,—lovers,
And marriage, and all that—if that be all!
One never knows—it is impossible
To hear what they are saying; they either speak
In whispers, or burst out in fits of laughter
At some incredible nonsense. There is nothing
So silly as young girls at just that age.—
At just Bianca's age, that is to say.
As for the other,—as for Beatrice,
She's older than Bianca, and I'll not have her
Putting ideas into my daughter's head!

Lorenzo. Fear not, my love. Your daughter's head will doubtless,
In its good time, put up its pretty hair,
Chatter, fall dumb, go moping in the rain,
Be turned by flattery, be bowed with weeping,
Grow gray, and shake with palsy over a staff,—
All this, my love, as empty of ideas
As even the fondest mother's heart could wish.

Octavia. You mock me, sir?

Lorenzo. I am but musing aloud,
As is my fashion.—And indeed, my dear,
What is the harm in lovers-and-all-that
That virtuous maidens may not pass the time
With pretty tales about them?—After all,
Were it not for the years of looking forward to it
And looking back upon it, love would be
Only the commonest bird-song in the hedge,—
And men would have more time to think,—and less
to think about.

Octavia. That may be. But young girls
Should not be left alone too much together.
They grow too much attached. They grow to feel
They cannot breathe apart. It is unhealthy.

Lorenzo. It may be true. But as for me, whom
youth
Abandoned long ago, I look on youth
As something fresh and sweet, like a young green
tree,
Though the wind bend it double.—'Tis you, 'tis I,
'Tis middle age the fungus settles on.

Octavia. Your head is full of images. You have
No answers. I shall do as I spoke of doing,
And separate them for a little while,

Six months, maybe a year. I shall send Bianca
Away within a fortnight. That will cure them.
I know. I know. Such friendships do not last.

[CURTAIN.]

ACT II

Scene I—Four months later

[*A garden, near the palace at Fiori. The young* DUKE GUIDO *is discovered standing with one foot resting on a garden-bench, looking off, lost in thought.*]

Enter GIOVANNI.

Giovanni. That is a merry face you wear, my Guido!
Now that the young King Mario visits the court
And walks all morning in the woods with the Princess,
Or gives her fencing lessons,—upon my word,
You are as gay as a gallows!
Guido. She is never
Alone with him. Laura—Carlotta—some one
Is always there.
Giovanni. Ah—ah—but even so,
No matter who is there, I tell you, lovers
Are always alone!

Guido. Why do you say these things, Giovanni?

Giovanni. Because I love you, you lean wolf,
And love to watch you snuff the air. My friend,
There was a time I thought it all ambition
With you, a secret itching to be king—
And not so secret, either—an open plot
To marry a girl who will be Queen some morning.
But now at times I wonder. You have a look
As of a man that's nightly gnawed by rats,
The very visage of a man in love.
Is it not so?

Guido. I do not know, Giovanni.
I know I have a passion in my stomach
So bitter I can taste it on my tongue.
She hates me. And her hatred draws me to her
As the moon draws the tide.

Giovanni. You are like a cat—
There never was a woman yet that feared you
And shunned you, but you leapt upon her shoulder!
Well, I'll be off. The prettiest girl in Fiori,—
Unless it be Her Highness, waits for me
By a fountain. All day long she sells blue plums,
And in the evening what she has left of them

She gives to me! You should love simply, Guido,
As I do.

[*Exit* GIOVANNI. GUIDO *sits on the bench and drops his head in his hand.*]

Enter FRANCESCA.

Francesca. [*Softly.*] Guido! Guido!
Guido. Who calls me?
Francesca. Guido!
Guido. Francesca! Why do you follow me here?
—You know
I do not wish to see you!
Francesca. Do not be angry.
'Tis half a week since you have spoken to me,
And more than a week since you have so much as laid
Your hand upon my arm! And do you think,
Loving you as I do, I can do without you,
Forever, Guido, and make no sign at all?
I know you said you did not wish to see me
Ever again,—but it was only a quarrel—
And we have quarreled before!
Guido. It was not a quarrel.
I am tired of you, Francesca. You are too soft.
You weep too much.

Francesca. I do not weep the less
For having known you.
Guido. So;—it will save you tears, then,
To know me less.
Francesca. Oh, Guido, how your face
Is changed,—I cannot think those are the eyes
That looked into my eyes a month ago!
What's come between us?
Guido. Nothing has come between us.
It is the simple snapping of a string
Too often played upon.
Francesca. Ah!—but I know
Who snapped it! It will do you little good
To look at her,—she'll never look at you!
Guido. Be silent a moment!—Unless you would be silent longer!
Francesca. Indeed! I shall speak out my mind!
You go beyond yourself! There is proportion
Even in a nature like my own, that's twisted
From too much clinging to a crooked tree!
And this is sure: if you no longer love me,
You shall no longer strike me!
Mario. [*Off stage.*] Beatrice!
Wait for me! Wait!

Beatrice. [*Off stage.*] Not I! Who does not run
As fast as I run, shall be left behind me!

Guido. They are coming here! I do not wish to see them!

Francesca. Oh, Guido!

[*She follows him off. Exeunt* GUIDO *and* FRANCESCA.]

Enter BEATRICE, *running, followed by* MARIO.

Mario. Beatrice, you run like a boy!
You whistle like a boy! And upon my word,
You are the only girl I ever played
At jousting with, that did not hold her sword
As if it were a needle! Which of us,
Think you, when we are married, will be King?

Beatrice. When we are married! Sir, I'll have you know
There's an ogre to be tamed, a gem to be pried
From out a dragon's forehead, and three riddles
To be solved, each tighter than the last, before
A Princess may be wed!

Mario. Even by a King?

Beatrice. For Kings the rules are sterner!—One more riddle,
And a mirror that will show her always young.

Mario. And if I do these things, then, will you have me, Rose-Red?

Beatrice. Maybe. And if you do not do them,
Maybe. Come—I will race you to the bridge!

Mario. [*Catching her hand.*] Nay, not so fast!—
Have you no wish to be
Beside me, ever, that you are forever running
Ahead?

Beatrice. Indeed, if you would have the truth
It has come into my mind more times than once
It would be sweet to be beside you often.

Mario. Rose-Red!

Beatrice. Come—I will race you to the bridge!

[*Exeunt* BEATRICE *and* MARIO.]

Scene II

[*Courtyard of the palace at Fiori. Entire court assembled. A band of strolling players, with a little stage on wheels, are doing a Harlequinade pantomime to amuse the young* KING MARIO, *the guest of honor.* BEATRICE *sits beside him. In this scene the two people who are oblivious to the pantomime are* GUIDO *and* OCTAVIA. GUIDO *is apparently brooding over some-*

thing. From time to time he looks at BEATRICE *and* MARIO. *Once, having gazed for some moments at the pair, he looks at* OCTAVIA *and sees that she, too, is looking at them, which seems to satisfy him. The Queen does not take her eyes from the two during the entire scene.* BEATRICE *and* MARIO *do not conduct themselves precisely as lovers, but they are very gay and happy to be in each other's company, apparently.* LORENZO *watches the show with a benign, almost childish interest.*]

[*Pantomime begins.*]

Giovanni. You, Pierrot, are you not a little thick
For such a sorrowful fellow?

Pierrot. Nay, indeed!
Sorrow may come to all. And 'tis amazing
How much a man may live through and keep fat.

[*Pantomime continues.*]

Carlotta. Ho! Now he stumbles! Look you, Pantaloon,
If you were not so learned i' the head
You might know better where to put your feet!

Laura. [*To* CARLOTTA.] 'Tis curious how it addles a man's bones
To think too much.

Carlotta. Nay, truth. Wise men were ever
Awkward i' the legs.

[*Pantomime continues.*]

Raffaele. Have at him, Polichinello.
Giovanni. Lay on! Lay on!
Anselmo. Leave not a nail of him!
Giovanni. Dog! Would you have him write a book about you?
Luigi. Spit him i' the liver! It is his only organ!
Beatrice. [*To* MARIO.] Nay, it is cruel. I cannot look at it.
Mario. It is but play.
Beatrice. Ay, but 'tis cruel play.
To be so mocked at!—Come, take heart, good Doctor!
'Tis a noisy fellow, but light withal!—Blow at him!
GIOVANNI. [*To* GUIDO.] She has the softest heart that ever I saw
In a hard woman. It may be, seeing she has pity
For one rogue, she has pity for another!
Mark you, my Guido, there is hope yet!
Guido. Nay,
There's not. I have opened up my mind to her,
And she will none of me.

Giovanni. [*Jestingly.*] That was the last thing
You should have done!—Speak,—did she give for answer
She loves the King?
Guido. Not she. She gave for answer
She does not love the Duke.

[*Pantomime continues.*]

Anselmo. [*To* COLOMBINE.] Ah, pretty lady!
Carlotta. La, she is fickle! How she turns from one face
To another face,—and smiles into them all!
Francesca. Oh, ay, but 'tis the Pierrot that she loves.

[*Pantomime continues and comes to a close. All applaud.*]

Luigi. Well done!
Anselmo. Bravo!
Giovanni. A monstrous lively play!
Beatrice. Oh, is it over?—I would it were not over!
Mario. And yet it pleased you not!
Beatrice When it pleased me not, I looked at you.
Mario. And when I pleased you not—?

Beatrice. I looked at Harlequin. However, I saw him
But fleetingly. Pray, was he dark or fair?
Luigi. Laura!
Laura. Who calls? La, it is only Luigi!
Luigi. Laura, there'll be a moon to-night.
Laura. I' faith,
There was a moon last night. [*She sighs.*
Luigi. At ten o'clock,
Were I by a certain gate, would you be there?
What say you?
Laura. Ay,—if weariness overtook me,
And I could not get further!
Carlotta. La, 'tis sundown!

[*In the meantime the crowd has been breaking up and dispersing. The curtain falls on the disappearing spectators and on* PIERROT *and his troupe packing up their wagon to go to the next town.*]

Scene III

[*Fiori. A garden with a fountain. Evening. Enter* OCTAVIA *and Ladies.*]

Octavia. It would amuse me if I had a lily
To carry in my hand. You there, Carlotta!
You have a long arm,—plunge it in the pool

And fish me forth a lily!

Claudia. Majesty,
They close at night.

Octavia. Well—we will open them.

Carlotta. [*Going to pool and scanning it.*] Go to —I am not a frog!

Octavia. What did you say?

Arianna. She says she sees a frog, Your Majesty.

Francesca. [*Aside to* CARLOTTA.] You are mad! Can you not keep your tongue in your head?

Carlotta. Ay, I can keep it in my cheek.—There's one.
God grant it have an eel at the end of it,—
I'll give the dame good measure.

While the ladies are at the pool enter GUIDO.

Guido. Greeting, madam!

Octavia. Who greets me?—Ah, it is the Duke. Good even, Guido. You seek an audience with me?

Guido. Nay—nay—but if you send away your women,—
We shall be more alone.

Octavia. [*After considering him a moment.*] You may leave me now,

Laura, Francesca—all of you—and you would best
go in
At an early hour, instead of walking the gardens
All night; I would have you with your wits
About you in the morning.
Laura. [*Aside.*] Oh, indeed?
You would best go in yourself, lest the dew rust you,
You saucepan!

[*Exeunt ladies.*]

Octavia. Now, my good sir,—you may speak.
Guido. [*As if by way of conversation.*] It is a long
time, is it not, your daughter—
Is absent from the court?
Octavia. Why say you that?
Guido. Why, but to pass the time, till she returns?
Octavia. Nay, Guido. That is well enough for
some,
But not for me. I know the slant of your fancy;
'Tis not in that direction.
Guido. Yet methinks
The sooner she is back again at court
The happier for us both.
Octavia. "Us both"? What "both"?
Guido. You, madam, and myself.

Octavia. And why for me?

Guido. [*Carefully.*] Why, are you not her mother?

Octavia. Hah! [*Pause.*] Guido,
What festers in your mind? Do you speak out now,
If you await some aid from me.

Guido. Madam,
I have but this to say: if I were a woman
With a marriageable daughter, and a King rode by,
I'd have her at the window.

Octavia. So. I thought so.
[*With an entire change of manner.*]
Guido, what think you,—does she love the King,—
I mean Lorenzo's daughter?

Guido. Ay, she loves him.

Octavia. And loves he her?

Guido. Oh, ay. He loves the moon,
The wind in the cypress trees, his mother's portrait
At seventeen, himself, his future children—
He loves her well enough. But had she blue eyes
And yellow hair, and were afraid of snakes,
He yet might love her more.

Octavia. You think so, Guido?
I am content to learn you of that mind.
There had occurred to me—some time ago,

In fact—a similar fancy. And already
My daughter is well on her way home.

[*Exeunt* GUIDO *and* OCTAVIA.]

Music. Enter BEATRICE *and* FIDELIO. FIDELIO *strums his lute softly throughout the next conversation, up to the words "and cease to mock me."*

Beatrice. Fidelio,
Were you ever in love?

Fidelio. I was never out of it.

Beatrice. But truly?

Fidelio. Well, I was only out of it
What time it takes a man to right himself
And once again lose balance. Ah, indeed,
'Tis good to be in love. I have often noticed,
The moment I fall out of love, that moment
I catch a cold.

Beatrice. Are you in love, then, now?

Fidelio. Ay, to be sure.

Beatrice. Oh! Oh! With whom, Fidelio?
Tell me with whom!

Fidelio. Why, marry, with yourself,—
That are the nearest to me,—and by the same troth,
The farthest away.

Beatrice. Go to, Fidelio!

I am in earnest, and you trifle with me
As if I were a child.

Fidelio. Are you not a child, then?

Beatrice. Not any more.

Fidelio. How so?

Beatrice. I am in love.

Fidelio. Oh—oh—oh, misery, misery, misery, misery!

Beatrice. Why do you say that?

Fidelio. Say what?

Beatrice. "Misery, misery."

Fidelio. It is a song.

Beatrice. A song?

Fidelio. Ay, 'tis a love-song.
Oh, misery, misery, misery, misery, oh!

Beatrice. Nay, sweet Fidelio, be not so unkind!
I tell you, for the first time in my life
I am in love! Do you be mannerly now,
And cease to mock me.

Fidelio. What would you have me do?

Beatrice. I would have you shake your head, and pat my shoulder,
And smile and say, "Godspeed."

Fidelio. [*Doing so very tenderly.*] Godspeed.

Beatrice. [*Bursting into tears.*] I' faith
I do not know if I am happy or sad.
But I am greatly moved. I would Bianca
Were here. I never lacked her near so much
As to-night I do, although I lack her always.
She is a long time gone.—If I tell you something,
Will you promise not to tell?
Fidelio. Nay, I'll not promise,
But I'll not tell.
Beatrice. Fidelio, I do love so
The King from Lagoverde! I do so love him!
Fidelio. Godspeed, Godspeed.
Beatrice. Ay, it is passing strange;
Last week I was a child, but now I am not.
And I begin my womanhood with weeping;
I know not why.—La, what a fool I am!
'Tis over. Sing, Fidelio.
Fidelio. Would you a gay song,
My Princess?
Beatrice. Ay.—And yet—nay, not so gay.
A simple song, such as a country boy
Might sing his country sweetheart.—Is it the moon
Hath struck me, do you think? I swear by the moon
I am most melancholy soft, and most
Outrageous sentimental! Sing, dear Fool.

Fidelio. [*Singing.*]

"Butterflies are white and blue
In this field we wander through.
Suffer me to take your hand.
Death comes in a day or two.
All the things we ever knew
Will be ashes in that hour.
Mark the transient butterfly,
How he hangs upon the flower.
Suffer me to take your hand.
Suffer me to cherish you
Till the dawn is in the sky.
Whether I be false or true,
Death comes in a day or two."

[CURTAIN.]

ACT III

Scene I—The following summer

[*A field or meadow near Fiori. As the curtain rises voices are heard off stage singing a bridal song.*

SONG: "*Strew we flowers on their pathway!*
Bride and bridegroom, go you sweetly.
There are roses on your pathway.

Bride and bridegroom, go you sweetly.
Sweetly live together."]

Enter VIOLA, LILINA, LELA, ARIANNA *and* CLAUDIA, *laden with garlands, flowering boughs, and baskets of flowers. They meet* ANSELMO *coming from another direction, also bearing flowers.*

Viola. How beautiful, Anselmo! Where did you find them?

Anselmo. Close by the brook.

Lilina. You gathered all there were?

Anselmo. Not by one-hundredth part.

Lela. Nay, is it true?
We must have more of them!

Arianna. And are they fragrant
As well?

Anselmo. Ay, by my heart, they are so sweet
I near to fainted climbing the bank with them.

[*The ladies cluster about* ANSELMO *and smell the flowers.*

Lilina. Oh!

Viola. Ah!

Claudia. How drowsily sweet!

Lela. Oh, sweet!

Arianna. What fragrance!

Enter LAURA *and* GIOVANNI, *followed by* CARLOTTA *and* RAFFAELE.

Laura. La, by my lung! I am as out of breath
As a babe new-born! Whew! Let me catch the air!
[*She drops her flowers and seats herself beside them.*
Carlotta. [*To the younger ladies and* ANSELMO *by way of greeting.*]
How hot the sun is getting.
Anselmo. 'Tis nigh noon,
I think.
Giovanni. 'Tis noon.
Claudia. We must be starting back.
Laura. Not till I get my breath.
Raffaele. Come,—I will fan you. [*He fans her with a branch.*
Laura. 'Tis good—'tis very good—oh, peace—oh, slumber—
Oh, all good things! You are a proper youth.
You are a zephyr. I would have you fan me
Till you fall dead.
Carlotta. I tell you when it comes
To gathering flowers, much is to be said
For spreading sheets on the grass,—it gives you less
The backache.

Laura. Nobly uttered, my sweet bird.
Giovanni. Yet brides must have bouquets.
Carlotta. And sit at home,
Nursing complexions, whilst I gather them.
Lilina. [*Running to* CARLOTTA, *along with* LELA *and* VIOLA, *and throwing her arms about her.*]
Nay, out upon you now, Carlotta! Cease now
To grumble so,—'tis such a pretty day!
Viola. And weddings mean a ball!
Lela. And one may dance all night
At weddings!
Lilina. Till one needs must dance to bed,
Because one cannot walk there!
Giovanni. And one eats
Such excellent food!
Anselmo. And drinks such excellent wine!
Claudia. And seldom will you see a bride and bridegroom
More beautiful and gracious, or whom garlands
Do more become.
Giovanni. 'Tis so,—upon my sword!—
Which I neglected to bring with me—'tis so,
Upon Anselmo's sword!
Carlotta. Nay, look you, Laura!

You must not fall asleep! [*To* RAFFAELE.] Have done, you devil!
Is it a poppy that you have there? [*To* LAURA.] Look you,
We must be starting back! [LAURA *rouses, then falls back again.*
Laura. Ay, that we must.
Arianna. Where are the others?
Anselmo. Scattered all about.
I will call to them. Hola! You fauns and dryads!
Where are you?
Voices. Here! Here! Is it time to go?
Anselmo. Come this way! We are starting back!
Voices. We are coming!
We'll come in a moment! I cannot bear to leave
This place!
Giovanni. [*As they enter.*] A thousand greetings, lovely Clara!
Lucia, a thousand greetings! How now, Luigi!
I know you, man, despite this soft disguise!
You are no flower-girl!
Luigi. I am a draught-horse,
That's what I am, for four unyielding women!
Were I a flower-girl, I'd sell the lot
For a bit of bread and meat—I am so hungry

I could eat a butterfly!

Carlotta. What ho, Francesca!
I have not seen you since the sun came up!

Francesca. This is not I,—I shall not be myself
Till it goes down!

Lela. Oh, la, what lovely lilies!

Francesca. Be tender with them—I risked my life
to get them!

Lilina. Where were they?

Francesca. Troth, I do not know. I think
They were in a dragon's mouth.

Laura. [*Suddenly waking.*] Well, are we going?
[*All laugh.*

Luigi. No one is going that cannot go afoot.
I have enough to carry!

Laura. Nay, take me too!
I am a little thing. What does it matter—
One flower more?

Luigi. You are a thousand flowers,
Sweet Laura,—you are a meadow full of them—
I'll bring a wagon for you.

Carlotta. Come. Come home.

[*In the meantime the stage has been filling with girls and men bearing flowers, a multitude of people, in groups and couples, humming the song very*

softly. As CARLOTTA *speaks several more people take up the song, then finally the whole crowd. They move off slowly, singing:*

"Strew we flowers on their pathway," etc.

Scene II

[BIANCA'S *boudoir in the palace at Fiori.* BIANCA *with a mirror in her hand, having her hair done by a maid. Several maids about, holding perfume-flasks, brushes, and veils, articles of apparel of one sort or another.* BEATRICE *standing beside her, watching.*]

Bianca. Look at me, Rose-Red. Am I pretty enough,
Think you, to marry a King?

Beatrice. You are too pretty.
There is no justice in it. Marry a cobbler
And make a king of him. It is unequal,—
Here is one beggarly boy king in his own right,
And king by right of you.

Bianca. Mario is not
A beggarly boy! Nay, tell me truly, Beatrice,
What do you think of him?

Beatrice. La, by my soul!
Have I not told you what I think of him

A thousand times? He is graceful enough, I tell you,
And hath a well-shaped head.

Bianca. Nay, is that all?

Beatrice. Nay, hands and feet he hath, like any other.

Bianca. Oh, out upon you for a surly baggage!
Why will you tease me so? You do not like him,
I think.

Beatrice. Snow-White! Forgive me! La, indeed,
I was but jesting! By my sacred word,
These brides are serious folk.

Bianca. I could not bear
To wed a man that was displeasing to you.
Loving him as I do, I could not choose
But wed him, if he wished it, but 'twould hurt me
To think he did not please you.

Beatrice. Let me, then,
Set your sweet heart at rest. You could not find
In Christendom a man would please me more.

Bianca. Then I am happy.

Beatrice. Ay, be happy, child.

Bianca. Why do you call me child?

Beatrice. Faith, 'tis the

Season o' the year when I am older than you.
Besides, a bride is always younger than a spinster.
Bianca. A spinster! Do you come here to me, Rose-Red,
Whilst I pinch you smartly! You, Arianna, push me
Her Highness over here, that I may pinch her!
[*To* LORETTA.] Nay, is it finished? Ay, 'tis very well.
Though not so well, Loretta, as many a day
When I was doing nothing!—Nay, my girl,
'Tis well enough. He will take me as I am
Or leave me as I was.—You may come back
In half an hour, if you are grieved about it,
And do it again. But go now,—all of you.
I wish to be alone. [*To* BEATRICE.] Not you.

[*Exeunt all but* BEATRICE *and* BIANCA.]

Oh, Rose-Red,
I trust 'twill not be long before I see you
As happy as you see me now!
Beatrice. Indeed,
I could not well be happier than I am.
You do not know, maybe, how much I love you.
Bianca. Ah, but I do,—I have a measure for it!

Beatrice. Ay, for to-day you have. But not for long.
They say a bride forgets her friends,—she cleaves so
To her new lord. It cannot but be true.
You will be gone from me. There will be much
To drive me from your mind.
Bianca. Shall I forget, then,
When I am old, I ever was a child?
I tell you I shall never think of you
Throughout my life, without such tenderness
As breaks the heart,—and I shall think of you
Whenever I am most happy, whenever I am
Most sad, whenever I see a beautiful thing.
You are a burning lamp to me, a flame
The wind cannot blow out, and I shall hold you
High in my hand against whatever darkness.
Beatrice. You are to me a silver bell in a tower.
And when it rings I know I am near home.

Scene III

[*A room in the palace.* MARIO *alone. Enter* BEATRICE.]

Beatrice. Mario! I have a message for you!—Nay,
You need not hang your head and shun me, Mario,

Because you loved me once a little and now
Love somebody else much more. The going of love
Is no less honest than the coming of it.
It is a human thing.

Mario. Oh, Beatrice!
What can I say to you?

Beatrice. Nay, but indeed,
Say nothing. All is said. I need no words
To tell me you have been troubled in your heart,
Thinking of me.

Mario. What can I say to you!

Beatrice. I tell you, my dear friend, you must forget
This thing that makes you sad. I have forgotten,
In seeing her so happy, that ever I wished
For happiness myself. Indeed, indeed,
I am much happier in her happiness
Than if it were my own; 'tis doubly dear,
I feel it in myself, yet all the time
I know it to be hers, and am twice glad.

Mario. I could be on my knees to you a lifetime,
Nor pay you half the homage is your due.

Beatrice. Pay me no homage, Mario,—but if it be
I have your friendship, I shall treasure it.

Mario. That you will have always.

Beatrice. Then you will promise me
Never to let her know. I never told her
How it was with us, or that I cherished you
More than another. It was on my tongue to tell her
The moment she returned, but she had seen you
Already on the bridge as she went by,
And had leaned out to look at you, it seems,
And you were looking at her,—and the first words
She said, after she kissed me, were, "Oh, sister,
I have looked at last by daylight on the man
I see in my dreams!"

Mario. [*Tenderly.*] Did she say that?

Beatrice. [*Drily.*] Ay, that
Was what she said.—By which I knew, you see,
My dream was over,—it could not but be you.
So that I said no word, but my quick blood
Went suddenly quiet in my veins, and I felt
Years older than Bianca. I drew her head
Down to my shoulder, that she might not see my face,
And she spoke on, and on. You must not tell her,
Even when you both are old and there is nothing
To do but remember. She would be withered
With pity for me. She holds me very dear.

Mario. I promise it, Rose-Red. And oh, believe me,
I said no word to you last year that is not
As true to-day! I hold you still the noblest
Of women, and the bravest. I have not changed.
Only last year I did not know I could love
As I love now. Her gentleness has crept so
Into my heart, it never will be out.
That she should turn to me and cling to me
And let me shelter her, is the great wonder
Of the world. You stand alone. You need no shelter,
Rose-Red.

Beatrice. It may be so.

Mario. Will you forgive me?

Beatrice. I had not thought of that. If it will please you,
Ay, surely.—And now, the reason for my coming:
I have a message for you, of such vast import
She could not trust it to a liv'ried page,
Or even a courier. She bids me tell you
She loves you still, although you have been parted
Since four o'clock.

Mario. [*Happily.*] Did she say that?

Beatrice. Ay, Mario.

I must return to her. It is not long now
Till she will leave me.

Mario. She will never leave you,
She tells me, in her heart.

Beatrice. [*Happily.*] Did she say that?

Mario. Ay, that she did, and I was jealous of you
One moment, till I called myself a fool.

Beatrice. Nay, Mario, she does not take from you
To give to me; and I am most content
She told you that. I will go now. Farewell,
Mario!

Mario. Nay, we shall meet again, Beatrice!

Scene IV

[*The ballroom of the palace at Fiori, raised place in back, surmounted by two big chairs, for* LORENZO *and* OCTAVIA *to sit while the dance goes on. Dais on one side, well down stage, in full sight of the audience, for* MARIO *and* BIANCA. *As the curtain rises the stage is empty except for* FIDELIO, *who sits forlornly on the bottom steps of the raised place in the back of the stage, his lute across his knees, his head bowed upon it. Sound of laughter and conversation, possibly rattling of dishes, off stage, evidently a feast going on.*]

Laura. [*Off stage.*] Be still, or I will heave a plate at you!

Luigi. [*Off stage.*] Nay, gentle Laura, heave not the wedding crockery
At the wedding guest! Behold me on my knees
To tell the world I love you like a fool!

Laura. Get up, you oaf! Or here's a platter of gravy
Will add the motley to your folly!

Luigi. Hold her,
Some piteous fop, that liketh not to see
Fine linen smeared with goose! Oh, gracious Laura,
I never have seen a child sucking an orange
But I wished an orange, too. This wedding irks me
Because 'tis not mine own. Shall we be married
Tuesday or Wednesday?

Laura. Are you in earnest, Luigi?

Luigi. Ay, that I am, if never I was before.

Laura. La, I am lost! I am a married woman!
Water!—Nay, wine will do! On Wednesday, then.
I'll have it as far off as possible.

Enter from banquet-room GUIDO, GIOVANNI, *and* RAFFAELE.

Giovanni. Well met, Fidelio! Give us a song!
Fidelio. Not I!
Guido. Why is this? You, that are dripping with song
Weekdays, are dry of music for a wedding?
Fidelio. I have a headache. Go and sit in a tree,
And make your own songs.
Raffaele. Nay, Fidelio.
String the sweet strings, man!
Giovanni. Strike the pretty strings!
Guido. Give us the silver strings!
Fidelio. Nay then, I will that!
[*He tears the strings off the lute and throws them in* GUIDO'S *face.*]
Here be the strings, my merry gentlemen!
Do you amuse yourselves with tying knots in them
And hanging one another!—I have a headache.

[*He runs off, sobbing.*]

Raffaele. What ails him, think you?
Giovanni. Troth, I have no notion.

Enter NURSE.

Guido. What ho, good Grazia! I hear my uncle
Is ill again!

Grazia. Where heard you that, you raven?

Guido. Marry, I forget. Is't true?

Grazia. It is as false
As that you have forgotten where you heard it.
Were you the heir to his power, which I bless God
You're not!—he'd live to hide the throne from you
Full many a long day yet!—Nay, pretty Guido,
Your cousin is not yet Queen,—and when she is—
Faith,
She weareth a wide petticoat,—there'll be
Scant room for you beside her.

[*Exit* NURSE *across stage.*]

Guido. [*To his companions.*] None the less
I do believe the king is ill.

Raffaele. Who told you?

Guido. His wife. She is much exercised about him.

Giovanni. 'Tis like enough. This woman would rather lie
Than have her breakfast served to her in bed.

[*Exeunt* GUIDO, GIOVANNI, *and* RAFFAELE.]

[*Music. Enter musicians and take places on stage. Enter four pages and take places on either side the door as from the banquet-hall and on either side the throne in the back. Enter King and Queen, that is to say* LORENZO *and* OCTAVIA, LORENZO *apparently quite well, and seat themselves on throne in back. Enter courtiers and ladies,* CARLOTTA *with* ANSELMO, LAURA *with* LUIGI, *etc., and stand in little groups about the stage, laughing and talking together. Enter* BEATRICE *alone, her train held by two pages in black. Enter twelve little Cupids, running, and do a short dance in the center of the room, then rush to the empty dais which is awaiting* MARIO *and* BIANCA, *and cluster about it. Enter* BIANCA *and* MARIO, *she in white and silver, with a deep sky-blue velvet train six yards long, held up by six silver pages (or Cupids); he in black and gold, with a purple velvet train of the same length held by six gold pages (or Cupids). His arm is about her waist, she is leaning back her head against him and looking up into his face. They come in slowly, talking softly together, as utterly oblivious of the court, the pages, the music, everything, as*

if they were a shepherd and a shepherdess walking through a meadow. They walk slowly across the stage and seat themselves on the dais. The music changes, strikes up a gay pavane; the ladies and courtiers dance. GUIDO, GIOVANNI, *and* RAFFAELE *re-enter just as the music starts and go up to the ladies;* GUIDO *goes to* BEATRICE, *and she dances with him. In the midst of the dance* LORENZO *slips a little sidewise in his chair, his head drops forward on his chest; he does not move again. Nobody notices for some time. The dance continues, all who are not dancing watching the dancers, save* OCTAVIA, *who watches with great pride and affection* BIANCA *and* MARIO, *who in turn are looking at each other.* OCTAVIA *turns finally to speak to* LORENZO, *stares at him, touches him, then screams. Music stops in confusion on a discord, dance breaks up wildly, everybody rushes to throne.*

Scene V

[*The same room later that evening, entirely empty, disordered. Musicians' benches overturned, for example, a couple of instruments left about, garlands*

trampled on the floor, a wing of one of the Cupids clinging to the dais of BIANCA *and* MARIO. *Enter* BEATRICE, *weeping, goes to her father's throne and creeps up into it, with her face toward the back of it and clings there, sobbing quietly. Enter* BIANCA *and* MARIO.]

Bianca. [*Softly.*] Ay. She is here. I thought she would be here.

There are so many people by his bed
Even now, she cannot be alone with him.

Mario. Is there no hope?

Bianca. Nay, there is none. 'Tis over.
He was a kind old man.

Mario. Come, let us go,
And leave her to herself.

Bianca. Nay, Mario.
I must not leave her. She will sit like that
All night, unless I bid her come away,
And put her into bed.

Mario. Will you come to me
After she sleeps?

Bianca. Ay. If she sleeps.

Mario. And if not?

Bianca. I could not leave her.

Mario. Bianca, do you love me?

Bianca. Ay, Mario!

Mario. Ah, but not as I love you!

Bianca. You do not think that, Mario; you know
How much I love you. But I could not be happy
Thinking of her awake in the darkness, weeping,
And all alone.

Mario. Oh, my sweet love!

Bianca. It may be
She will sleep.

Mario. I shall be waiting for you.

[*They embrace. Exit* MARIO. BIANCA *goes to* BEATRICE *and sits at the foot of the throne, putting her head against* BEATRICE'S *feet.*

Bianca. Sister.

[*After a moment* BEATRICE *slowly reaches down her hand, and* BIANCA *takes it.*

[CURTAIN.]

ACT IV

Scene I—Five years later

[*A market place in Fiori, vegetables, fruits, and flowers exposed for sale in little stalls and wagons, crowd of townspeople moving about, talking, laughing, buy-*

ing. Group of children playing a game in a ring. Supper time.]

Children. One, two, three,
The dough is in the oven!
One, two, three,
The bread is on the board!
One, two, three,
The dough is in the oven!
One, two, three,
The bread is on the board!
One, two, three,
All follow me!

Eugenia. Good-even, Giovanitta. Those are beautiful
Onions you have there.

Giovanitta. Ay, it has been a good year
For onions.

Eugenia. I am taking seven.

Giovanitta. Each year,
You buy another onion!

Eugenia. Faith, each year
I have another mouth to thrust it in!
Beautiful carrots, too, you have.

Giovanitta. Ay, carrots

Are well enough. One cannot complain. 'Tis a good year
For carrots.

Clara. 'Tis a good year for many things.
Prices are low,—but not too low for profit.

Giuliana. And there are fewer taxes than there once were
On things one cannot live without.

Anna. 'Tis a good Queen
We have, it must be granted.

Giovanitta. Ay, and a wise one.

Gilda. And pretty, too.

Giuliana. Ho, ho! When did you see her?

Gilda. This morning, mother. I was at the edge of the wood
With Beppo, when they rode by to the hunt,
Talking together, and laughing.

Beppo. [*Calling from across the stage.*] And the horses
With feet like this! [*Arching his hands and feet to represent a horse stepping delicately.*

Gilda. And glittering in the sunshine
In a thousand places, mother! I wanted to tell you
When we returned, but you had gone to the brook

With the linen. They were so near us we could hear them
Talking.

Beppo. [*Coming up.*] And hear the horses breathe!

Anna. What said they?

Gilda. Well, one of them said—what was the name?

Beppo. Anselmo.

Gilda. Oh, ay. She said, "Anselmo, am I getting thinner
Do you think? If I be not thinner than I was at starting,
I shall descend at once! I like not this;
It chatters my teeth."

Beppo. And then she said—

Gilda. What said she?
Oh, ay,—about the boat.

Beppo. She said, "Next time
I shall go fishing instead of hunting. A boat
Hath a more mannerly gait!"

Gilda. There was one horse, mother,
That was all white! There was not one hair upon him
That was not white!

Giuliana. And who was riding that horse?

Beppo. A man. And riding well.
Gilda. He was dressed in green,
And had a yellow beard. And there was a lady
With hair the color of Adelina's, bright
Like fire. She was dressed in blue, and was most beautiful.
Beppo. And she was mounted on a dappled mare.
Gilda. But, oh, it was the Queen that was more lovely—
Than any of the rest!
Giovanitta. How did you know, now,
It was the Queen?
Gilda. Nay, but you could not help
But know! She was not laughing like the rest,—
Just smiling; and I would not have been afraid
To toss a flower to her from the wood,
If I had had a flower.
Beppo. You knew her, though,
Because she was in scarlet. All the world knows
She wears a scarlet mantle!
Gilda. Nay, if that were all,
It might have been the Pope!
Beppo. I would it had been.
I never saw the Pope.
Gilda. You never saw

The Queen until this morning!—Mother, she rides
Clothed like a man, almost!

Beppo. With sword at side!

Gilda. And, oh, the sword had a jeweled—what is the name of it?

Beppo. Scabbard, of course!

Gilda. A jeweled scabbard, mother!
I wish I were a queen.

Beppo. Ho, you would make
A proper queen, with that droll nose of yours!

Gilda. I know a boy who likes my nose!

Beppo. Ho, ho!
He must be a hunchback!

Giuliana. You must not tease her, Beppo.

Gilda. I wish I were queen. If I were a queen,
You would not dare to say my nose is droll.

Beppo. It would be, all the same.

Giovanitta. You should be content
With what you have, not wish to rise beyond it.
It is a sin to covet.

Giuliana. Being a queen,
My bird, is not all riding to the hunt
Of a sunny morning.

Anna. Nay, 'tis riding back
At times, of a rainy night, to such a burden

Of cares as simple folk have little mind of.

Gilda. I'd rather have a queen's cares than my own.

Beppo. Ho, ho! Your cares! What cares have you?

Gilda. I have
A brother that will be teasing me all times!
'Tis cares enough for one, I tell you.

Adelina. [*Across stage.*] Beppo!
Come help me fetch the milk!

Gilda. Oh, Mister Beppo,
Your sweetheart calls you! Run and fetch the milk!

Leonora. [*From a house, coming out.*] Come in to supper, children!

Rigo. Oh, not just yet!

Elenora. Father's not home yet!

Leonora. You need not wait for him.

Luisa. May we come out again?

Leonora. [*Joining other women.*] Ay, for a time.
Till it gets dark.

Rigo. [*To* LUISA.] 'Tis dark now, almost.

Luisa. Hush!
She does not know it.

Giuliana. 'Tis dark now.

Leonora. Ay, I know.

I let them play a little after dark
Sometimes, when the weather's fine. I would not have them
Afraid of shadows. They think I do not know
Darkness from light.

Elenora. There's father now!

Rigo. I see him!

[ELENORA, LUISA, *and* RIGO *run off the stage and along the path.*

Leonora. He is late home to-day. I cannot think
What may have held him. 'Twill be deep night already
In the woods.

Cesco. [*Off stage, harshly.*] Down! Down! Do you run back to your mother!
See you not I am in haste?—Hang not upon me!

Eugenia. La! He is in a temper!

Leonora. I never knew him
So out of patience with them.

Giuliana. He is hungry, maybe.

Leonora. He is often hungry, but I never knew him
So out of patience. [*The children come running back. To* ELENORA.]
Why do you weep, my heart?

Luisa. Father is some one else to-night.
Elenora. [*Weeping.*] He pushed me!

Enter CESCO, *with game on his shoulder, or a basket of mushrooms.*

Several Women. Good-even, Cesco.
Cesco. [*To* LEONORA.] Look you, Leonora,
Have we a bed fit for a queen to lie in?
Leonora. Nay, faith! Not we!
Gilda. She can have my bed, mother.
Giuliana. Ay, true. There is a bed in my house, Cesco.
Giovanitta. What will the queen do here?
Giuliana. I would indeed
She had let us know that she was coming!
Cesco. The Queen
Knew not herself. Nor is she coming of herself.
They are bringing her, —on a litter of crossed boughs.
Gilda. She is not *dead?*
Cesco. Nay. Wounded i' the arm
A little, and in a swoon. But the young King
Of Lagoverde is no more!
Women. How so?

Cesco. I tell you my two eyes have looked this day
On a sad and useless thing!—A fine lad, young,
And strong, and beautiful as a lad may be,
And king of a fair country, thrust from horse
By a foul blow, and sprawled upon the ground,—
Legs wide asunder, fist full of brown mud,
Hair in his eyes,—most pitiful unkingly!
Bring me a mug of wine, good wife!

[LEONORA *goes out.*]

Giovanitta. You, Gilda!
There is a queen you would not be to-night,
I'll warrant you,—the Queen of Lagoverde,
With her two fatherless babes!

Eugenia. Nay, now, good Cesco,
What is this matter?

Cesco. You'll know it quick enough.
They will be bringing the Queen here ere I have breath
To tell you. They are coming by the road.
I took the mountain path, and ran.

Giuliana. I must hasten
To put fresh sheets on. [*To* GILDA.] Look you,—
listen well
If he should talk, and tell me afterwards. [*Exit.*

Eugenia. Here comes Horatio! The boats are

in. [*Some children rush down to the waterside.*]
A good day, husband?

Horatio. Ay, a heavy day.
What think you of that?—A big one, eh?—Came in
With a school of little fish,—too greedy that time!
What happens here?—The air is full of breathing!

[*The men come up from the boats with children clinging to them.* BEPPO *and* ADELINA *return from another direction with the milk.*

Leonora. [*Somewhat proudly.*] Cesco will tell you.

Cesco. In a word 'tis this: To-day the Queen of Fiori,
Returning from the hunt, is set upon
By brigands; whereat the King of Lagoverde,
Being hunting in that quarter and hearing cries,
Comes up to give his aid; in rendering which
He gives his life as well, and at this moment,
On other men's legs, goes heavily home to supper.
The Queen of Fiori, wounded, and in a swoon
Only less deep than death itself, comes this way.

Crowd. Ay, here they come!

Enter ANSELMO.

Anselmo. Make way, make way, good people—

Fall back a little—leave a clear space—give air!

Enter LAURA *and* FRANCESCA, LUIGI, *several gentlemen, and several attendants, four of them bearing a litter on which lies* BEATRICE, *in a scarlet cloak, her hair flowing.* LUIGI *is with* LAURA, *who clings to him. If possible to arrange, several of the party may lead on their horses and lead them off across the stage. The litter is set down stage in full sight of the audience.* BEPPO *comes down stage near it, as does also, from another direction,* GILDA. GIULIANA *returns.*

Anselmo. Who has a bed that we may lay her on? She cannot leave this place to-night.

Giuliana. This way, sir.

[*The attendants pick up the litter and go off, the crowd following.*

Gilda. [*Stealing back.*] Hist, Beppo!

Beppo. Ay?

Gilda. Heard you not something fall, When they picked her up again?

Beppo. Ay, that I did.

Gilda. What was it, think you? [*They search.*] Nay, 'twas nearer here.

Beppo. I have it.—'Tis her sword!

Gilda. The Queen's? Ay,—truly.

How beautiful!

Beppo. [*Slowly and with awe drawing it from its scabbard.*

Look,—there is blood on it!

Scene II

[*A room in the palace at Lagoverde.* BIANCA *and her two little daughters discovered at the rise of the curtain, she in a big chair, they at her feet.*]

Bianca. And so the fairy laid a spell on her:
Henceforth she should be ugly as a toad.
But the good fairy, seeing this was done,
And having in no wise power to alter this,
Made all toads beautiful.

Little Rose-Red. They are not beautiful Now, mother!

Little Snow-White. That was in another country! What country, mother? [BIANCA, *lost in thought, does not answer.*

Little Rose-Red. Where is father, mother?—I have not seen him in so many days!

Bianca. Father is gone away.

Little Rose-Red. Will he come back?

Bianca. Nay. He will not come back. But we shall go

Where he is.

Little Snow-White. Soon?

Bianca. God grant it may be soon!
Now—shall we play a game?

Enter OCTAVIA.

Octavia. . Bianca

Bianca. Ay.

Octavia. It is a folly to remain indoors
Like this. You should be out in the sunshine.

Bianca. Nay.
I have no business with the sunshine.

Octavia. Ah,
My daughter, say not so!—The children, then,—
They have much need of it, and they have need
Of you, at the same time. Take them without.

Bianca. I do not wish to be in the sunshine.

Little Snow-White. Mother,
Come out of doors!

Octavia. You see, now!

Bianca. Do you run out, dears,
And play at ball. Mother will join you later.

Little Rose-Red. Where *is* my ball?

Bianca. Nay, do you not remember?

We put it in the ear of the stone griffin,
Because he hears too much.
Little Rose-Red. Ay, so we did!
Little Snow-White. Come on, Rose-Red!

[*Exeunt Children.*]

Octavia. It is a curious thing
This friend of yours you rate so monstrous high
Has not come nigh you in your sore affliction!
Bianca. I beg you not to speak of that again,
Mother. 'Tis the third time to-day you have said that,
Or hinted at it. And I answer always,
"There is some reason for it," as I should answer
Though you cried daily till the day of doom,
"It is a curious thing!" There is some reason,
There is some good reason why she does not come.
Octavia. Oh, ay, I doubt it not! But there are reasons
And reasons!
Bianca. And what am I to learn from that?
Octavia. 'Tis scarce by reason of too much love for you
She leaves you friendless in your greatest need.

Bianca. I cannot say. 'Tis one thing or another.
You have no words can turn me to believe
She has forgotten me, or loves me less.
'Tis a big thing, to leave me thus alone,—
And there is some big reason.
Octavia. Ay. Oh, ay.
'Tis possible she grieves for Mario's death
No less than you.
Bianca. [*Simply.*] Ay, it is possible.
I mind she told me on my marriage-day
She was as happy as I.
Octavia. 'Tis a curious thing,
When he was here she came to see you often,
But now that he is gone comes not at all.
Bianca. [*Simply.*] Ay, it is curious. [*Catching* OCTAVIA'S *expression.*
Bianca. Nay, what evil thing
Is in your mind, gives you that evil smile?
Octavia. Only a little thought.
Bianca. A little thought,
I'll warrant you!—You'd have me to believe
She loved my husband?
Octavia. Ay, I know she loved him.
Bianca. It is a lie!
Octavia. How dare you say I lie!

Bianca. Oh, do not be so proud! Let us speak truth
At length, a little! We are so garnished up
With courtesies, so over-sauced and seasoned,
We cannot taste each other! Why do you tell me
A thing like that?—You have no love for me!
Octavia. [*Weeping.*] I love you too much—you are the only thing
I do love!
Bianca. Nay, it is not love of me
For my own self. Else would you do the thing
Would make me happiest. You know how I have loved her,
Since we were children. You could not be to me
What she was; one forgets too many things.
You could not know my thought. I loved you dearly,
But you were hard to love; one never knew
Whether you would be hot or cold to touch.
Whilst she and I,—oh, we were two young trees
So nearly of a height we had the same world
Ever within our visions!—Yet all these years,
Even from the time we first went to Fiori,
You have been bearing me your little tales,—
"She had done this and that, she was thus and so,—"

Seeking to stir and poison the clear water
Of my deep love for her! And now this thing.
Which is not true. But if it had been true,
It would not be so out of all reason cruel
As that you should have told me of it now.
Nay, do not weep. All day 'tis one of us
Making the other weep. We are two strange,
Unhappy women. Come, let us be at peace.

[*Pause.* BIANCA *rises suddenly.*]

Mother, farewell a little while. I go now
To her, seeing that she does not come to me.
But not to question her, not to demand,
"How comes it: this? What can you say to that?"
Only to sit beside her, as in the old days,
And let her lay her quiet on my heart.

Scene III

[*The garden at Fiori, same as in Act I, Scene I. Discovered seated on a stone bench in the sunshine,* BEATRICE, *clad in a loose gown, looking very ill.* FIDELIO *sings off stage.*]

Fidelio. [*Singing.*]

"Let the little birds sing,
Let the little lambs play.

Spring is here, and so 'tis spring,—
But not in the old way.

"I recall a place
Where a plum-tree grew,—
There you lifted up your face
And blossoms covered you.

"If the little birds sing,
And the little lambs play,
Spring is here, and so 'tis spring,—
But not in the old way."

Beatrice. It is a pretty song. There be some things
That even the tortured heart's profoundest anguish
Cannot bring down from their high place. Music
Is one of them.

Enter GRAZIA *carrying a bowl.*

Grazia. Now, will you drink this broth,
Or will you not? I swear upon my shroud—
And 'tis a solemn oath—I never nursed
So vaporous a patient!—Come, my bird!

Beatrice. [*Taking the bowl, then setting it down.*]
Nay, Nurse, I cannot.

Grazia. Oh, alackaday!
What shall I do with you? Come now, and drink me
The pretty broth, my dear!
Beatrice. I will drink it later.
'Tis too hot.
Grazia. Ay, and in a moment 'twill be
Too cold! And you'll not drink it! I could cry!

[*Exit* GRAZIA.]

Enter FIDELIO.

Beatrice. Fidelio, as you love me, do you drink this,
And quickly, man!
Fidelio. [*With grief.*] Oh, my dear mistress!
Beatrice. Drink!
Fidelio. [*Sadly, drinking.*] I best would leave a little, else she'll know
'Twas never you.
Beatrice. Ay, so you would. I' faith,
It is a knave's trick, but I cannot touch it.
Go now, Fidelio, ere she come again.

[*Exit* FIDELIO.]

Enter BIANCA.

Bianca. [*Softly.*] Rose-Red. [BEATRICE *looks up and listens, thinking it a dream.*

Bianca. Rose-Red, dear sister!

Beatrice. [*Bowing her head and weeping.*] Oh, my heart!

Bianca. [*Coming toward her.*] Why do you weep?

Beatrice. [*Looking up startled and seeing her, jumping to her feet.*] Oh, no! Oh, God above!
Go back! Go back!

Bianca. [*Amazed, quietly.*] Beatrice, are you mad?
'Tis I, Bianca.

Beatrice. [*More quietly.*] Ay, I know 'tis you.
And you must go away.

Bianca. [*Breaking down.*] You are mad, my dear!

Beatrice. I would I were. For madmen have their moments
Of light into the brain.—Hear me, Bianca,
You must return at once to Lagoverde,
And come to me no more, and think of me
No more.

Bianca. Ay. I will go. But ere I go

Tell me you do not love me. 'Tis apparent
You do not. I but wish to hear the words.

Beatrice. Nay, that I will not say. It would be well,
To say it, and let it be. But I'll not say it,
It is not true.

Bianca. You love me still?

Beatrice. I love you
More than all else on earth. But I have wronged you
So hugely that I cannot think of it
And stand here talking with you—I am ill— [*She staggers.*]
You must pardon me—I have been very ill—

Bianca. Then it is true?

Beatrice. [*With a cry as of relief.*] Ay, it is true! Who told you?

Bianca. My mother told me. I said it was not true.
But if 'tis true—I pity you, Rose-Red.
I pity him. I pity us all together.

Beatrice. [*Feverishly.*] Ah, I can see it now!—the quiet road
In the deep wood's gathering darkness, the reins loose

On the horses' necks, that nodded, nodded, and we
Speaking from time to time, and glad to think
Of home,—and suddenly out of nowhere,—fury,
And faces, and long swords, and a great noise!
And even as I reached to draw my sword,
The arm that held the scabbard set on fire,
As if the sleeve were burning!—and my horse
Backing into the trees, my hair caught, twisted,
Torn out by the roots! Then from the road behind
A second fury! And I turned, confused,
Outraged with pain, and thrust,—and it was Mario!

Bianca. [*Wildly.*] What are you saying? What are you saying? What is this
You are telling me? That it was you? Your hand—?
Oh, God have mercy upon me! Let me go!

Beatrice. [*Pitifully, reaching out her arms toward her.*]

Snow-White! Snow-White!—farewell!

Bianca. [*Without turning.*] Oh, God have mercy!

[*Exit* BIANCA. BEATRICE *falls unconscious to the floor.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT V

Scene I

[*A room in the palace at Fiori.* ANSELMO *and* LUIGI.]

Luigi. Nay, is that true, Anselmo?

Anselmo. Ay, 'tis true.
But no one saw save me. I drew her sword
Out of his heart and thrust it in its scabbard,
Where she lay senseless.

Luigi. Oh, unhappy Queen!

Anselmo. Ay, she does not forget. Has it not struck you
She rides no more? Her black horse stands in stable,
Eating his head off. It is two years now
Since she has visited Lagoverde; and the Queen
Of Lagoverde comes not nigh this place.

Luigi. There's not the reason that there was to come
Before Octavia's death.

Anselmo. Nay, 'tis not that.

Luigi. Think you that Beatrice told her?

Anselmo. Ay,
I doubt it not.

Luigi. 'Tis hard. They were close friends.

Anselmo. And since that day her hand upon the scepter
Trembles,—and Guido sees. She goes too much
Among the people, nursing them. She loves them;
Their griefs are hers, their hearts are hers, as well.
But Guido has a following in this court
That hangs upon his word, and he has taught them
Her gentleness is weakness, and her love
Faint-hearted womanish whims, till they are eager
To pull her down, and see a man in place of her.

Luigi. Her throne is like a raft upon a sea,
That shifts, and rights itself, and may go down
At any moment.

Anselmo. The more especially
For all these drowning beggars that cling to it,
Chattering for help. She will not strike them off.

Luigi. Unhappy Queen. And there's a storm approaching,
If ever I smelled wind.

Anselmo. I fear it, Luigi.

[*Exeunt* ANSELMO *and* LUIGI.

Enter GUIDO *and* FRANCESCA.

Francesca. How do I know you love her still?—
I know,
The way you fall a-tapping with your fingers,
Or plucking at your eyebrows, if her name
Be spoken, or she move across the court.
How do I know?—Oh, Guido, have I learned you
So little, then, in all these bitter years?
I know you very well.
Guido. You know too much.
I'll have an end of this, I tell you!
Francesca. Ay.
You've told me that before.—An end of what?
What is this thing you'll put this mighty end to?
'Fore God I would I knew. Could I but name it,
I might have power to end it then, myself!
Guido. I'll have an end of these soft words at twilight,
And these bad mornings full of bile! I'll have an end
Of all this spying on me!
Francesca. [*Gently.*] 'Tis not so.
I do not spy upon you. But I see you
Bigger than other men, and your least gesture—

A giant moving rocks.—Oh, Guido, tell me
You do not love her! Even though I know
You lie, I will believe you,—for I must!

Guido. [*Pause.*] Nay, I am done with you. I will tell you nothing.

Out of my way!—I have that on my mind
Would crush your silly skull like the shell of an egg!
Od's body, will you keep your ugly claws
From scratching at my sleeve? [*He thrusts her roughly aside and rushes out.*

Francesca. [*Creeping away, sobbing.*] Oh, God—oh, God—
I would whatever it is, that 'twere over. [*Exit.*

Enter FIDELIO, *and crosses the stage, singing.*

Fidelio. [*Singing.*]

"Rain comes down
And hushes the town.
And where is the voice that I heard crying?
Snow settles
Over the nettles.
Where is the voice that I heard crying?
Sand at last
On the drifting mast.

And where is the voice that I heard crying?
Earth now
On the busy brow.
And where is the voice that I heard crying?"

[*Exit* FIDELIO.]

Scene II

[*The court-room in the palace at Fiori, crowded with restless and expectant people. The crowd is arranged on both sides of the stage, in such a way that a broad avenue is left in the middle, leading from the footlights to the back of the stage and gradually narrowing to a point at* BEATRICE'S *throne. On the extreme right and left of the stage, along the back of the crowd, stands the guard, a large body of armed soldiers, at attention, in double row. On either side the throne stands an armed soldier. As the curtain rises the court is all standing and looking off stage in a certain direction. Enter the Queen.* BEATRICE, *from that direction, walks in, looking straight ahead, goes to the throne and seats herself. The court sits. The clerk begins to read.*]

Clerk. The first case to be heard is that of Lisa,
A widow with two small children, who resides

Near the Duke's wood, and has been caught in the act
Of cutting trees there, and hauling them home to burn.
Beatrice. Stand, Lisa. You are a widow, I am told,
With two small children.
Lisa. Ay, Your Majesty,
Two little boys.
Beatrice. I know another widow, Lisa,
With two small children,—but hers are little girls.
Have you been cutting trees on the Duke's land?
Lisa. No, Majesty. I could not cut a tree.
I have no ax.
Beatrice. And are you strong enough
To break a tree with your hands?
Lisa. No, Majesty.
Beatrice. I see. What do you do, then? There must be
Some reason for this plaint.
Lisa. I gather wood
That's dead,—dried boughs, and underbrush that's been
A long time on the ground, and drag it home.
Beatrice. Have you a wood-pile?

Lisa. Nay. I gather enough
Each day for the day's need. I have no time
To gather more.
Beatrice. And does the dry wood burn
As well as other wood?
Lisa. Oh, better!
Beatrice. I see.
You would as lief, then, have this wood you gather,
This dead wood, as a green tree freshly cut?
Lisa. Ay, I would liefer have it, Majesty.
I need a fire quickly. I have no time
To wait for wood to season.
Beatrice. You may sit down,
Lisa. Is the Duke's agent here?
Agent. Ay, here.
Beatrice. What is it the Duke's custom to have done
With this dead wood on his estate?
Agent. He burns it,
Your Majesty.
Beatrice. You mean to say, I think,
He pays a price to have it gathered and burned.
Agent. Ay, Majesty.
Beatrice. Where is it burned?
Agent. In a clearing.

Beatrice. And what is cooked upon it?
Agent. Nothing is cooked.
The Duke is not a gypsy. [*With irritation.*
[*Pause. Slight titter in court-room, instantly hushed into profound silence.*
Beatrice. [*Evenly.*] If he were,
He would be shrewder, and not be paying money
For what this woman is glad to do for naught.
Nothing is cooked, and nobody is warmed,—
A most unthrifty fire! Do you bid the Duke,
Until he show me sounder cause for plaint,
Permit this woman to gather unmolested
Dead wood in his forest, and bear it home.—Lisa,
Take care you break no half-green boughs.—The next case?
Clerk. Is that of Mario, a miller, accused
Of stealing grain. A baker, by name Pietro,
Brings this complaint against him.
Messenger. [*Rushing in and up to throne.*] Majesty,
Bianca of Lagoverde lies a-dying,
And calls for you!
Beatrice. [*Rising.*] She calls for me?
Messenger. Ay, Majesty
[Beatrice *stands very still a moment, then turns to the townspeople.*

Beatrice. [*Earnestly and rapidly.*] You people,
do you go now and live kindly
Till I return. I may not stay to judge you;
Wherefore I set you free. For I would rather
A knave should go at large than that a just man
Be punished. If there be a knave among you,
Let him live thoughtfully till I return.

[*She steps down from the throne, and is immediately seized by the arm on either side by the two guards who have been standing beside the throne.*

Beatrice. Why, what is this, Enrico? [*Looking up at the soldier on her right.*]
Nay, it is not
Enrico! [*Looking to other side.*] Nor is it Pablo!
How is this?

[*From each side of the stage one row of the double row of soldiers detaches itself, marches down around the front of the stage and up toward the throne, making an armed alley for the Queen to walk down, and entirely surrounding the crowd.*] Nay, all new faces.
So! Upon my word,
This is a marvelous sight.—Do you stand back.
And keep your fingers from me!—I see you there,
Angelo! Do not turn your head aside!

And you, Filippo!—Is the sick hand better
I bound the bandage on?—Is't well enough
To draw a sword against me?—Nay, I am sick.
I, that have loved you as your mothers love you—
And you do this to me! Lead me away.

[*The two guards lead out the Queen. Nobody else moves. The townspeople cower and stare. The two little pages that bore her train as she entered remain back of the throne, not knowing what to do. As she goes by them, her train dragging on the ground, the two ragged little boys of* LISA, *the wood-gatherer, run out from the group of citizens, pick up the end of her train, and go out, holding it up, one of them with his arm over his eyes.*

Scene III

[*A dungeon.* BEATRICE *alone, sitting on a bench, her head bowed in her hands. Enter* GUIDO.]

Beatrice. Guido, is't you!

Guido. Ay, it is I, my Queen.
You sent for me, an I mistake not?

Beatrice. Ay.
Guido, you will not keep me when I tell you
Snow-White is dying and calls my name!

Guido. I knew that.

Beatrice. You knew that, and you hold me here.
Oh, Heaven!
What are you?
Guido. I am a man. You should have thought
Of that before. I could have been your friend
If it had pleased you. Failing that, I am
Your enemy. I am too aware of you,
And have been ever, to hold me in at less.
Beatrice. Guido. I beg of you upon my knees
To let me go!
Guido. And why should I do that?
Beatrice. For pity's sake!
Guido. I do not know the word.
Beatrice. Then for the sake of my sworn hand and seal
Upon a paper yielding fair to you
This sovereignty you prize. It is to me
Little enough to-night. I give it gladly.
Guido. You have no power to give what I have taken
Already, and hold upon my hand, Rose-Red.
Beatrice. Oh, do not speak that name! Oh, Guido, Guido,
I cannot suffer further! Let me go!

If only for a moment, let me go!
I will return,—I will but take her hand,
And come away! I swear it! Let me go!
Guido. On one condition only.
Beatrice. Ay! 'Tis granted,
Ere it is spoken!
Guido. That upon returning
You come to me, and give yourself to me,
To lie in my arms lovingly. [*She is stricken speechless.*] You hear?
To lie in my arms lovingly.
Beatrice. Oh, God!
Guido. It is my only word.
Beatrice. Oh, God! Oh, God!
Guido. 'Tis granted?
Beatrice. Nay,—I cannot! I will die
Instead. Oh, God, to think that she will lie there
And call for me, and I will never come!
Guido. Good-night. [*He goes to door.*
Beatrice. [*In a quiet voice.*] Guido!
It shall be as you say.
Guido. [*Rushing to her.*] Ah, Beatrice!
Beatrice. Nay, touch me not yet.
I will return. [*She laughs like a child.*] Why, 'tis a simple matter!

I wonder now that even for a moment
I held myself so dear! When for her sake
All things are little things!—This foolish body,
This body is not I! There is no I,
Saving the need I have to go to her!

Scene IV

[*A room at Lagoverde.* BIANCA *lying in bed, ill to death. The children clinging to the bed, their nurse trying to draw them away.* GIULIETTA, *a maid, in the background. Possibly other attendants about.*]

Little Rose-Red. Finish the story, mother!

Nurse. Come away, now!

Little Snow-White. Finish the story!

Bianca. Do you go away with nurse
A little while. You will bring them back to me
Later?

Nurse. [*Weeping.*] Ay, madam. [*She goes out with the children.*

Bianca. Later—not much later,
I think.—Hear you no sound of horses yet,
Giulietta, galloping this way?

Giulietta. Nay, not yet.

Bianca. [*To herself.*] I will not go until she comes.
I will not.

Still,—if I should—Giulietta!

Giulietta. [*Coming quickly to the bed.*] Ay, my mistress!

Bianca. She will come, I tell you!

Giulietta. Ay, I doubt it not.

Bianca. Ay, she will come. But if she should come late,
And I no longer be here to receive her,
Show her all courtesy, I conjure you.
She will be weary, and mightily distraught.
Make her take wine,—and bring the children to her.
And tell her they are hers now. She is their mother.
[GIULIETTA *starts to go back to the window.*]
And say to her—wait!—I have a message for her.
Say to her this, Giulietta: The foot stumbles,
The hand hath its own awkward way; the tongue
Moves foolishly in the mouth; but in the heart
The truth lies,—and all's well 'twixt her and me.
Can you remember that?

Giulietta. Ay, madam, I think so.
If not the words at least the gist of it.

Bianca. Forget it all, my good child, but forget not:
All's well 'twixt her and me.

Giulietta. Nay, that I have.

Bianca. I will sleep now a little. Do you leave me.
But go not far. [*She lies still for a moment, then starts up.*]
I hear the sound of hoofbeats!
Giulietta. Nay, madam.
Bianca. Ay, I tell you! I can hear them!
My face upon the pillow brings my ear
Nearer the ground! She is coming! Open the door!
[*She kneels up in bed and holds out her arms toward the door, maintaining this position till* BEATRICE *comes.* GIULIETTA, *weeping, opens the door, and stands in it, shaking her head sadly.*
Giulietta. [*Suddenly lifting her head and listening.*]
Nay, it is so! I hear it now myself!
Ay, there's a horse upon the bridge!
Bianca. She's coming!
Stand back! Stand out of the doorway! [*Pause.*
Servant. [*Entering.*] Majesty,
The Queen is here.
Bianca. Ay, ay! Stand out of the doorway! [*Pause.*
Giulietta. She is here! She is in the court! She has leaped from horse!
Madam, oh, God be praised! This way!

Bianca. Sister!

[BEATRICE *enters in her riding clothes, leaps to the bed.* BIANCA *throws her arms about her neck, and dies.*

Beatrice. [*After a moment, looking down at her.*] Snow-White! Oh, no! Oh, no! Snow-White! [*She screams.*] Ah-h! Help me!

She is dying! [*Attendants and nurses rush in, also the children.*

Little Snow-White. Mother, wake up!

Little Rose-Red. Finish the story!

Beatrice. Take them away. Snow-White! [*Leaning over the bed.*

Nurse. Nay, it is over, madam.

Beatrice. Leave me. Leave me alone with her.

[*Exeunt all but* BEATRICE. *She kneels beside the bed*]

Scene V

[*A room at Lagoverde. The next day.* BEATRICE *alone.*]

Beatrice. In sooth, I do not feel the earth so firm
Under my feet as yesterday it was.
All that I loved are gone to a far land,

And left me here alone, save for two children
And twenty thousand enemies, and the thing
Of horror that's in store for me. Almost
I feel my feet uprooted from the earth,
There's such a tugging at me to be gone.
Save for your children [*looking off stage toward* BIANCA'S *room*] 'twould be simple enough
To lay me down beside you in your bed,
And call on Death, who is not yet out of hearing,
To take me, too.

Enter FIDELIO.

Fidelio. Mistress, I have news for you.
Guido is dead!

Beatrice. Is dead?

Fidelio. Ay, he is dead.
Dead of a dagger i' the back,—and dead enough
For twenty. Scarce were you gone an hour's time
We came upon him cold. And in a pool
Near by, the Lady Francesca floating drowned,
Who last was seen a-listening like a ghost
At the door of the dungeon. 'Tis a marvelous thing!
But that's not all!

Beatrice. Nay, what more can there be?

Fidelio. Mistress, in the night the people of Fiori

Rose like a wind and swept the Duke's men down
Like leaves! Come home! Come home! We will have supper
On a flat rock, behind a mulberry bush,
Of milk and tarts and honey and white bread—
All in one day!

Beatrice. There is but half of me
To hear your tidings. I would clasp my hands together
But one of them is stricken from my side.

Enter GIULIETTA.

Giulietta. Madam.

Beatrice. Ay, Giulietta.

Giulietta. Madam, last night,
Before you came, she bade me tell you something,
And not forget. 'Tis this: That the foot stumbles,
The hand doth awkward things, and the foolish tongue
Says what it would not say,—but in the heart
Truth lies,—and all is well 'twixt her and you. [*She starts to go out, and turns back at the door.*]
She bade me above all things to forget not
The last: that all is well 'twixt her and you. [*Exit.*

Beatrice. [*Slowly and with great content.*] She is
not gone from me. Oh, there be places
Farther away than Death! She is returned
From her long silence, and rings out above me
Like a silver bell!—Let us go back, Fidelio,
And gather up the fallen stones, and build us
Another tower.

[CURTAIN.]

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